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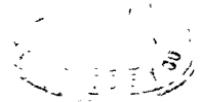
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NIGERIAN PERSPECTIVES

An Historical Anthology



Terracotta head from a Nok culture figure, Benue valley, probably made during
the last few centuries B.C.

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WEST AFRICAN HISTORY SERIES

General Editor: GERALD S. GRAHAM

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NIGERIAN PERSPECTIVES

An Historical Anthology

BY

THOMAS HODGKIN

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LONDON

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

IBADAN ACCRA

1960

Oxford University Press, Amen House, London E.C.4

GLASGOW NEW YORK TORONTO MELBOURNE WELLINGTON
BOMBAY CALCUTTA MADRAS KARACHI KUALA LUMPUR
CAPE TOWN IBADAN NAIROBI ACCRA

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*Preparation and publication of this series
has been made possible by the
generous financial assistance of
West African Newspapers Group
Lagos, Accra, Freetown, and London*

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19.1.61
766.9/Hod

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS, OXFORD
BY VIVIAN RIDLER
PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY

TO DOROTHY

FOREWORD

'Prodit nunc tandem historia mea Aethiopica, dudum ab amicis exspectata, dudum promissa.' I have borrowed this opening from Ludolphus, thinking it appropriate, if one may use 'Ethiopian' in the old general sense of 'African'. Admittedly, this is not a history, but only a collection of some of the stuff from which history is made. Like Ludolphus, I am conscious how much longer it has taken to collect this stuff than I had imagined at the outset. And now that I can continue collecting no longer, I realize how much has been left out—especially as regards the Arabic, and to some extent also the German and French, sources. In another ten years—when all the work on Nigerian pre-colonial history now in progress, or projected, has begun to bear fruit—it will be possible to produce an anthology of a much more adequate kind. Meanwhile I hope that this sample will at least give some idea of the range of material that exists.

Since the main purpose of this anthology is to present the points of view of those who have observed or recorded Nigerian history as faithfully as possible, I have in general avoided taking liberties with texts. That is to say, I have normally retained the actual spellings of words, including place and personal names, as they stand in the texts that I have used—where these are originals or, like John Pory's version of Leo Africanus, venerable translations. Where there is a familiar contemporary form—e.g. 'Katsina' for 'Kashna'—which may not be immediately obvious, I have put it in square brackets after the term actually used. Punctuation, where it has seemed particularly odd, I have amended to conform with what I suppose to be modern usage. In the case of modern translations—especially modern translations of Arabic texts—I have allowed myself rather more latitude, altering the spelling of place and personal names, in the interests of intelligibility, and occasionally retranslating words, phrases, or sentences, where it has seemed possible to bring out the meaning of the original more exactly. I have tried to stick to the standard form of transliteration of Arabic names and terms—with minor modifications—in the Introduction and

notes, but not to introduce it into the text. This means, of course, that the name of a person or place may appear spelled in different ways in different contexts. I have tried to guard against confusion in such cases. But problems inevitably arise—e.g. from the fact that there are distinct Hausa and Arabic versions of the same name: ‘Usuman’ or ‘‘Uthmān dan Fodio’, or even, in a completely Arabized form, ‘‘Uthmān ibn Fūdī’. In matters of this kind I have not tried to be pedantically consistent—being inclined to agree with the late Mr. T. E. Lawrence: that it does not really matter if a she-camel is spelled in different ways on different pages, provided it is clear that she is the same she-camel.

The standard of the translations which I have used—I must admit—is variable. In some cases—e.g. the translations from the Portuguese in the Hakluyt Society’s publications—they are clearly dependable. In a few cases I have had to undertake the task of translating myself: these translations should be used with caution. Mr. Charles Smith and Mr. Richard Hill take the same view about the passages which they have very kindly translated—the one from the Arabic, and the other from the Turkish. For the main body of extracts from African authors writing in Arabic, I have depended—like most other people—upon the translations of the late Sir Richmond Palmer. One cannot mention Palmer without expressing a strong sense of gratitude. Among all the Nigerian administrators with scholarly interests, he undoubtedly did most to make essential texts and documents available. Without the work which he carried out or inspired a generation ago, we should be much worse off today. But, while one respects his achievement, it is impossible to be satisfied either with his translations or his commentaries. The former are not always accurate, and the biblical language which Palmer liked to use tends to obscure the meaning; the latter are often speculative, and always diffuse. Fresh editions, with translations, of basic texts—like *The Kano Chronicle*—are badly needed.

I have tried to prevent the notes from becoming too copious in relation to the text. But it seemed essential—in addition to providing brief biographical notes about the authors on whom I have drawn—to explain, as far as possible, technical or unusual terms, and to identify people and places mentioned in the

text. Where places referred to in the text do not occur in the maps and are not identified in the notes, this usually means that I have not been able to locate them.

As regards acknowledgements, there is much to be said for 'Abdullâh dan Fodio's formula:

I cannot now number all the shaikhs from whom I acquired knowledge. . . . Many a scholar and many a seeker after knowledge came to us from the East from whom I profited, so many that I cannot count them. Many a scholar and many a seeker after knowledge came to us from the West, so many that I cannot count them. May God reward them all with his approval. . . .

Among the shaikhs from whom I profited, I should particularly mention Professor Gerald Graham, a very kind and tolerant editor; David Williams, whose library I have constantly used; Professor Melville Herskovits and his colleagues and students at Northwestern University; Professor Wilfred Cantwell Smith and those associated with him at the Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, Montreal; Professor John Fage and Professor Peter Shinnie at the University College of Ghana—Dr. Fage, now translated to the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, read through the proofs, and made many valuable suggestions; Professor K. O. Dike, Dr. J. F. Ade Ajayi, Mr. Peter Lloyd, and Mr. W. J. Harris, at the University College, Ibadan—and above all Mr. Charles Smith of the Department of History, who helped me immeasurably on matters relating to the history of the Hausa States, the Fulani Empire, and Bornu, as well as with his fresh and vigorous translations of Arabic texts. Others whose suggestions, criticisms, and advice were especially valuable were the Reverend Gervase Mathew; Sir Alan Burns; Professor Philip Curtin; Dr. John Flint; Dr. Cherry Gertzel; Mr. Richard Hill; M. Claude Tardits; Mr. Kenneth Murray; and Professor D. A. Olderogge. In a more indirect way I have learned much from the work of M. Raymond Mauny, of the Institut Français d'Afrique Noire at Dakar, and of Dr. M. G. Smith, whose book on the Zaria political system I was very glad to have an opportunity of reading in typescript. The libraries of the International African Institute, the Institute of Commonwealth Studies and Rhodes House, Oxford, Northwestern

Foreword

University, McGill University, and of the University Colleges of Ghana and Ibadan, where much of the work has been done, have been consistently hospitable. For help over typing and the preparation of notes I am grateful to Miss Maria Walstra, Mrs. de la Ronde, Mrs. Weber, Luke, Anna and Elizabeth Hodgkin, and my mother; for the drawing of maps to Julian Cole.

Finally, I owe a great deal to Mr. Ayo Ogunsheye, Mallam Ahmadu Coomassie, Mallam Isa Wali, and many other Nigerian friends, who over the past twelve years have stirred my interest in their history, and shown me how to begin to learn something about it.

T. L. H.

14 July, 1960

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For permission to reproduce passages from the books mentioned acknowledgements are due to the following:

John Murray (Publishers) Ltd. (*The Bornu, Sahara and Sudan* by H. R. Palmer); Alhaji Sulaimanu Barau, O.B.E., M.H.C., Emir of Abuja in Council (*The Chronicle of Abuja*); Chief J. U. Egharevba (*A Short History of Benin*); The Royal African Society (Adebiyi Tepowa, *A Short History of Brass* and H. R. Palmer, 'An Early Fulani Conception of Islam' from *African Affairs*); the Hakluyt Society (*The Voyages of Cadamosto and other Documents* by G. R. Crone, *Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis* by Duarte Pacheco Pereira, *Europeans in West Africa* by J. W. Blake, and Robert Brown's edition of *Leo Africanus, History and Description of Africa done into English by John Pory*); The School of Oriental and African Studies, Lady Palmer and M. Hiskett (H. R. Palmer, *Two Sudanese Manuscripts of the 17th Century* and M. Hiskett, 'Material relating to the State of Learning among the Fulani before their *Jihād*' from the *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*); Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd. (*A Sudanese Kingdom* by C. H. Meek and Ibn Battūta: *Travels in Asia and Africa* edited by H. A. R. Gibb); The International African Institute and The Oxford University Press (*A Black Byzantium* by S. F. Nadel and *Akiga's Story* translated by Rupert East); The International African Institute (*Efik Traders of Old Calabar* by Daryll Forde); Faber & Faber Ltd. (*Baba of Karo* by M. F. Smith); Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, S.A. (*Ibn Khaldoun: Histoire des Berbères* translated by de Slane); C. E. J. Whitting (Hajji Sa'id: *History of Sokoto*); Presses Universitaires de France (P.-L. Monteil: *De Saint-Louis à Tripoli par le Lac Tchad*); Librairie Hachette, Éditeur, Paris (Émile Gentil: *La chute de l'empire de Rabeh*); Présence Africaine, cultural journal of the Negro World (Lasebikan: *Tonal Structure of Yoruba Poetry*); Chatto & Windus Ltd. (*The Story of My Life* by Sir Harry Johnston); The Government Printer, Lagos (*History of the First Twelve Years of the Reign of Mai Idris Alooma and Sudanese Memoirs* by H. R. Palmer, *The Rise of the Sokoto Fulani* by E. J. Arnett, *The Occupation of Hausaland* by H. F. Backwell, and *Kanuri Songs* by J. R. Patterson); George Allen & Unwin Ltd. (*The Koran Interpreted* by Professor A. J. Arberry); unpublished Crown Copyright material in the Public Record Office has been reproduced by permission of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office.

INTRODUCTION

'The soul continues to be ennobled in the study of the history of this generous age, especially when there is added to it the history of the strange and wonderful events which have occurred in this land before, and the annals of kings and learned men, and what can be pieced together of all this from the remembrance of rare happenings in these same countries. Here are things which the intellect finds pleasing, and which delight the ear in the telling.'

MUHAMMAD BELLO, *Infaq al-maysūr*

THIS selection of passages bearing on the history of Nigeria before 1900 is intended as an anthology rather than a source-book. I have tried, in deciding what to include, to take a writer's insight rather than his historical accuracy as my main criterion: to ask, in regard to each extract, how far does it succeed in illuminating some facet of the Nigerian past? However, the sheer lack of collections of documents relating to Nigerian history in any European language has certainly influenced me towards including the kind of material which I think students might look for, and feel disappointed if they do not find. If, therefore, it turns out that this anthology goes some way towards supplying students of Nigerian history with the kind of material that they can put to good use, so much the better.¹

One question at once arises: how much sense does it make to talk in this way about 'the Nigerian past', when the term 'Nigeria' only came into use in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and the Nigerian state, within its present boundaries, was not established until 1914?² It must be admitted that the phrase is a kind of shorthand. What we are in fact concerned with is many pasts, not one—the past histories of the various peoples and civilizations which constitute modern Nigeria. But the fact that the past breaks up into many pasts is not peculiar to Nigeria. The British past dissolves into an English, Scots, and Welsh past—and, at a further remove, into a Highland and a Lowland past, a Northumbrian and an East Anglian,

¹ See N. Latham, 'The Use of Source Material in the Teaching of History', *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, i. 2, Dec. 1957.

² For the origin of the term 'Nigeria', see James S. Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*, Cambridge, 1959, p. 44.

Introduction

a Wessex and a Cornish past. True, the United Kingdom has existed as an effective political unit for two hundred and fifty years, as contrasted with Nigeria's forty-five years; and as an independent state Nigeria is only now in process of coming into being. Besides, in retrospect the United Kingdom looks a reasonably solid affair, while the federal state of Nigeria tends to give outsiders an impression of greater fragility. (But this may be largely a matter of historical point of view: the United Kingdom must have looked fragile in 1745.)

Granted that Nigeria possesses a greater degree of internal diversity than the United Kingdom has possessed in modern history, what problems does this raise for those who wish to explore 'the Nigerian past'? It does not mean, as is sometimes suggested, that the study of Nigerian history is essentially an inquiry into the past of a conglomeration of peoples, whose associations with one another are purely 'artificial', the product of the colonial epoch. In one sense all human associations are artificial—in that they are man-made. But it will be clear, I hope, from the extracts which follow that a variety of links existed between the various states and peoples which were the predecessors of modern Nigeria: between Kanem-Bornu, the Hausa States, Nupe, the Jukun Kingdom, the Empires of Oyo and Benin, the Delta States, and the loosely associated Ibo communities. These relationships sometimes took the form of war and enslavement. But they expressed themselves also through diplomacy, treaties, the visits of wandering scholars, the diffusion of political and religious ideas, the borrowing of techniques, and above all trade. These passages are full of references to the impact of Ife on Benin; of Benin on Iboland; of Ibo society on the Delta States; of the Hausa peoples on Yorubaland; of Kanem-Bornu on the Hausa system. The states which in pre-colonial times dominated the Nigerian region were neither isolated nor self-sufficient. In addition to their relations with one another, they were exposed, in varying degrees at different periods, to influences from farther afield—from Mali and Gao, Egypt and the Maghreb, western Europe and North America.

None the less, one reason why it is difficult to present a coherent picture of the Nigerian past—of the various pasts of its constituent peoples—is that it is necessary to pursue several

themes at the same time. And, though these themes frequently run together and interlace, each is distinct: each culture has its own particular qualities, its proper history. The mind is liable to be confused by the multiplicity and the variety of the material. For this reason I have tried here to concentrate on five main themes: (i) Kanem-Bornu and its dependencies; (ii) the Hausa States and their southern neighbours, e.g. Nupe and the Jukun Kingdom, which, from the beginning of the nineteenth century, becomes in large part the history of the Fulani Empire; (iii) the Oyo Empire, and the Yoruba successor-states which established themselves in the nineteenth century after the disintegration of the Empire; (iv) the kingdoms of Benin and Warri; and (v) the Delta States and the predominantly Ibo hinterland. Geographically the first two systems belong to the central Sudan. But whereas the Hausa States have tended to look west, to the civilization that developed along the middle and upper Niger, Kanem-Bornu, with its focus in the region of Lake Chad, has been more closely linked with the states of the eastern Sudan and the Nile valley. Oyo and Benin both belong to the group of major states—including also Dahomey and Ashanti—which emerged in the Guinea forest region, limited to the east and north by the Niger, but colonizing at times beyond these limits. In the fifth sector the Ibo—and also the Ibibio—peoples whose main home lies in the forest east of the Niger have, during recorded history, become associated through a network of waterways and commerce with the states which grew up along the Niger Delta and at the mouth of the Cross River. This approach means, I admit, paying too little attention to several interesting minor themes—for example, the peoples of what is nowadays called ‘the Middle Belt’. My only defence is that historically these societies seem to have been of lesser importance; the material relating to them is sparser; and in any case there is much to be said for the principle that ‘entities should not be multiplied beyond what is necessary’.

Even with this limitation one is faced with a further problem: there are important variations in the depth to which the histories of these five groups of peoples, and the states they created, can be studied. The literary sources begin at different points in time—for obvious reasons. Kanem was sufficiently important

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to be known to Arab geographers as early as the ninth century. The ruling dynasty was converted to Islam at the end of the eleventh century. By the twelfth and thirteenth centuries Kanem was unquestionably the dominant state in the central Sudan. True, during this early period Kanem's centre of gravity lay east of Lake Chad. The use of the term 'Bornu' to refer to the western, trans-Chad, provinces does not occur till the thirteenth century—later, after the loss of the eastern provinces, passing into normal use as the name of the state.¹ But Kanem-Bornu has enjoyed such a remarkable degree of continuity—of dynasty, political system, and culture—that it seemed justifiable to include some of the earliest references from the Arab sources, as relating to the Kanuri, and thus to the Nigerian, past. The Hausa States, on the other hand, were not of sufficient political or commercial importance to make an impact on the outside world until the sixteenth century, when the Maghribi traveller, Leo Africanus, wrote his first-hand report on the region for Pope Leo X and Christendom. Even for the seventeenth-century Timbuktu historian, as-Sa'di, the Hausa States are only interesting because they were for a time included within the Gao Empire, and were occasionally visited by scholars from the major centres of learning in the western Sudan or North Africa. Thus for the Hausa past before 1500 we are wholly dependent upon local chronicles—composed in Arabic and relatively late in date, even though based upon earlier records—of which *The Kano Chronicle* is much the fullest and most informative.

In the case of Benin and Oyo there is no documentary material earlier than the writings of the Portuguese historians, geographers, and officials, dating from the beginning of the sixteenth century. Moreover, since before they began to develop relations with Europe these were non-literate societies, there are no written chronicles, or local *tarikhs*, to turn to. The only source, apart from artefacts, is oral tradition, preserved with ritual precision from generation to generation by court chroniclers. 'Historic tradition came to be closely associated with the fortunes of the royal house, . . . and the quasi-divine character of the kingly dead gave history something of the character of a

¹ Y. Urvoy, *Histoire de l'empire du Bornou*, Paris, 1949, p. 45. See below, Sect. II, p. 74.

sacred mystery.¹ These traditions, which are now being studied afresh by Nigerian historians, have been made available in modern times especially by Samuel Johnson, in the case of the Oyo Empire, and by Chief Jacob Egharevba in the case of Benin. From about 1500 until 1820 the European sources are naturally much richer for Benin than for Oyo, since the Oyo dominions, unlike Ashanti and Dahomey, stopped short of the coast, whereas Europeans had continuous, though carefully regulated, access to the capital of Benin.² Before Clapperton's journey through Yorubaland in 1825, when the centralized Oyo State was already breaking up, its institutions were known to Europeans only indirectly, through fragmentary, and sometimes romantic, reports which filtered through to Benin, Abomey, or Lagos.³

In what is nowadays the Eastern Region of Nigeria the situation was in some respects comparable. The 'city-states' of the Niger Delta—Bonny, Brass, New Calabar (Kalabari), and Old Calabar—were in contact with Europe from the early part of the sixteenth century.⁴ The material is not so substantial as for Benin, but it is useful. But the first European penetration into the Ibo hinterland did not occur until 1830, when Richard and John Lander made their famous journey down the Niger; and they, and most of their nineteenth-century successors, were restricted to contacts with the riverain Ibo. As far as I know, the only documentary sources for Ibo society before the Landers are—as in Oyo's case—second-hand material, collected by European visitors to the Delta States, with their partly Ibo population and culture: with one remarkable exception—the autobiography of the liberated Ibo slave and British citizen, Olaudah Equiano, containing his recollections of Ibo village life in the mid-eighteenth century.⁵ Allowing for a measure of inevitable literary artifice, I think this is an authentic record—especially valuable in the absence of other written records relating to this

¹ D. H. Jones, unpublished paper on 'The Kingdom of Dahomey', presented to the School of Oriental and African Studies' African History Conference, July 1953.

² See Benin extracts *passim*, particularly Sect. V, p. 120.

³ On the contacts of the states of the Guinea forest with the coast, see J. D. Fage, *Introduction to the History of West Africa*, Cambridge, 2nd ed. 1959, pp. 87–98.

⁴ For this use of the term 'city-state', see K. O. Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830–1885*, Oxford, 1956, p. 31.

⁵ Sect. VI, pp. 155–66.

period. There is, moreover, a special problem: only in the areas adjacent to and influenced by Benin—Onitsha and Abo—did Ibo society develop the kind of political institutions which made for the preservation of oral tradition—kingship, court chroniclers, and the like. Elsewhere, ‘in the absence of hereditary power there has been little incentive to preserve genealogical information, and the extremely small scale of political organisation has been inimical to the emergence of a concept of history’.¹

This explanation is partly also an apology for an evident lack of balance in the material included here. This preoccupation with Kanem-Bornu in the period before 1600; the increasing emphasis upon the Hausa States and Benin from the late fifteenth, and the Delta States from the seventeenth, century; the inadequacy of the material dealing with Oyo and Yorubaland before the eighteenth century, and with Ibo society before the nineteenth—this unbalance is partly the consequence of the unevenness of the sources—of the variations in historical depth to which I have referred.

This anthology, then, is conceived in three dimensions. The first is time. These extracts are arranged roughly in chronological order (according to the date to which they refer, not the date in which they were composed), and are meant to give some impression of process—of the ways in which things have changed. The second is space. The extracts relate to a variety of West African peoples—mainly the five major groupings mentioned above—which in historic times have inhabited definite, though changing, areas of what is now Nigeria. The third is culture. These extracts are intended to throw light on various aspects of the life of the Nigerian peoples in the pre-colonial period. What was the character of their villages and towns, their food and clothing, their family systems? How did they organize their farming, crafts, commerce, and communications? What methods of education, forms of government, and administration did they develop? What did they achieve in the arts and sciences? What were their basic religious, metaphysical, and moral beliefs? Naturally these questions, in so far as they are answered here at all, are answered only in a fragmentary and often impressionistic way. Readers who want

¹ D. H. Jones, unpublished paper on ‘The Ibo’, African History Conference, 1953.

a more adequate answer must go to the sources. Themes—connected with the development of European commerce, the processes of European penetration, the rivalries between the European Powers—which have often in the past been treated as part of African history, but belong more properly to European history, are ignored, except in so far as they reflected themselves in the life and thought of Nigerian societies. The ‘invaders’ are only interesting from the standpoint of their impact on the indigenous peoples.

Something must be said about the sources. At first glance they may seem an odd assortment. In fact they fall fairly clearly into three main categories: the Arab geographers; indigenous West African writers; and European travellers, or historians drawing upon the reports of travellers. Each group has made its own specific contribution to the understanding of the Nigerian past, and each has interpreted the civilizations of Nigeria from its own point of view.

Arab geography developed, from the ninth century on, principally in response to the needs of Muslim rulers, or ruling classes, who were interested in acquiring information such as would assist them in handling commercial and political relations within the vast area in which Islam had established itself. Under the Abbasids the ‘Director of Posts’ (*sāhib al-barid*) was an important functionary, whose duty it was to keep the central government supplied with up-to-date information in regard to routes, distances, methods of transport, economic and political conditions, within the provinces of the Empire.¹ Other stimuli were the influence of the Greek geographers, the great annual international Muslim assembly, the *hajj*, and the sheer intellectual curiosity of travellers confronted with the diversity of the Muslim world, stretching (by the tenth century) from the Indus to Spain, and from Transoxania to the Sahara. Thus the Arabs’ scientific interest in the western Sudan was closely associated with their practical interest in the trans-Saharan trade-routes, providing a network of communications between the Muslim societies of Egypt and the Maghreb and this peripheral, partially Islamized, economically important region—a main source of gold for the states on both sides of the Mediterranean. In Arab classification what we commonly call

¹ P. K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, London, 1953, pp. 322–5.

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‘geography’ fell into four distinct categories: (i) *‘ilm al-āṭwāl wa ‘l-urūd*, the science of longitudes and latitudes; (ii) *‘ilm taqwīm al-buldān*, the science of the position of countries; (iii) *‘ilm al-masālik wa ‘l-mamālik*, the science of routes and kingdoms; (iv) *‘ilm ‘ajā’ib al-buldān*, the science of the marvels of countries.¹ The geographical works from which I have quoted passages here belong to the two latter categories. That is to say, the author’s main object was to give an adequate descriptive account of *masālik wa mamālik*, as al-Bakrī actually called his work, with possibly some references to ‘marvels’—the peculiarities of national customs.

The main value of the Arab sources is that they cover a period—roughly from the ninth to the fifteenth century—during which Europe had virtually no knowledge of, and no contact with, West Africa. Therefore what the Arabs have to say about this region is precious—though, unfortunately, so far as concerns the peoples of what is now Nigeria, there is not a great deal of it. The Ghana, Mali, and Gao Empires, lying farther to the west, are much better documented. This is not surprising, since it was principally by way of the Maghreb that the Arab world developed its links with Negro Africa—by the short route across the Sahara, leading from Tafilalet in southern Morocco either to Walata and Mali (Ibn Battuta’s route), or to Gao and Timbuktu.² It was from Mali, as *The Kano Chronicle* makes clear, that Islam was first brought to the Hausa States in the fourteenth century.³ Thus during the flourishing period of Arab geography the Hausa States lay beyond the frontiers of the Muslim world, identified with the civilized world. But Leo Africanus, though technically a Christian convert, essentially belongs to the great tradition of Arab traveller-reporters. For the next three centuries, until the journeys of Denham and Clapperton, European writers who attempted to say anything about the western or central Sudan usually merely copied, or summarized, Leo Africanus.

Kanem-Bornu, as I have explained, was in a different situation. It enjoyed, probably from the ninth century on, its own

¹ R. Blachère and H. Darmaun, *Extraits des principaux géographes arabes du Moyen Age*, Paris, 1957, p. 7.

² E. W. Bovill, *The Golden Trade of the Moors*, Oxford, 1958, p. 53 and ch. ix.

³ Sect. II, p. 75.

independent links with the Muslim world, by the Kuwar-Fezzan route. By the thirteenth century Kanem controlled an empire which stretched north into the Fezzan, with Taghaghen as its administrative centre, and was on friendly terms with Tunisia and in diplomatic relations with Egypt.¹ It belonged, even if remotely, to Islamic civilization. For these reasons Arab geographers and historians who sought to give a description of Africa were bound to take account of Kanem. But none of them, before Leo Africanus, had first-hand knowledge of the country. They based their accounts mainly on what could be learned from Arab merchants or Kanuri pilgrims in Marrakesh, Tunis, or Cairo. The institution of divine kingship, the extent of Islamization, the boundaries of the kingdom, the size of the armed forces, the character and direction of foreign trade—these were the main topics which interested geographers like al-Bakrī, Idrīsi, or Maqrīzī, or an historian like Ibn Khaldūn.

The West African contribution is of especial importance—partly because there has been a tendency for ‘Westerners’ (including some Western-educated Africans) to see African history principally through European eyes; and to assume that Africans either had little or nothing that was significant to say about their own past, or lacked the techniques to say it. The extracts included here should at least give some idea of the range and value of the indigenous sources.

First, there are what may broadly be described as ‘chronicles’: for example, as-Sa‘di’s *Ta’rikh as-Sūdān*, primarily a history of the Gao Empire and only marginally concerned with this region; Ahmād Ibn Fartua’s two lively works, both dealing with the campaigns of Mai (Sultan) Idris Alooma of Bornu, whom Ibn Fartua accompanied as chief Imam; the *Diwan of the Sultans of Bornu*, giving a brief account of those events in each reign which the court historians thought worth recording; *The Kano Chronicle*, an invaluable source for the history not only of Kano but of neighbouring states; al-Hajjī Sa‘id’s *History of Sokoto*.² The ‘modern chronicles’ to which I have referred, such as Samuel

¹ Sect. II, pp. 74–78.

² Mr. Charles Smith has pointed out that ‘since the foundation of the vizierate of Sokoto (c. 1809) it has been the practice of the Wazirai to publish annals of the ruling dynasty’, a practice which still continues (H.F.C. Smith, ‘Arabic Manuscript Material bearing on the History of the Western Sudan’, *Historical Society of Nigeria, Supplement to News Bulletin*, iii. 4, 1959).

Johnson's classic *History of the Yorubas*, belong essentially to the same category. Works of this type have both the excellences and the weaknesses of chronicles everywhere and at all times. There is no clear dividing-line between fact and legend; there is a preoccupation with the ruling dynasty and its achievements, particularly its wars—indeed one function of history is to glorify the dynasty. At the same time, the fact that chroniclers are interested in details and in novelty—and take the trouble often to record technical, social, or administrative changes, even if they do not attempt to explain them—gives their material special value.

There is also the remarkable range of works associated with the period of the Fulani *jihād*, and continuing through the first half of the nineteenth century, covering almost the entire range of the traditional Islamic sciences—theological, exegetic, legal, literary, grammatical, mystical, and so forth. 'Uthmān dan Fodio, the founder of the Sokoto Caliphate, and his successors—his son, Muḥammad Bello, and his younger brother, 'Abdullāh—were all three prolific writers.¹ They had a positive message to deliver to the rulers, '*ulamā'* (men of learning), and people of the central Sudan, and their writings were one method of expounding it. Correspondence is another fruitful source: for example, the profoundly interesting exchange of letters between Sultan Muḥammad Bello and Muḥammad al-Kānamī, Shehu of Bornu, on the question of the justifiability of the Fulani *jihād* from the standpoint of Muslim law, quoted at length by Bello in his best-known work, *İnfāq al-maysūr*;² samples of Muḥammad al-Kānamī's correspondence with the Sarkin Kano and George IV of England;³ and correspondence between Fulani provincial governors and the central government at Sokoto on the eve of the British occupation.⁴ There are official documents, such as the *Mahrans*, or grants of privilege, conferred upon particular families by the Mais of Bornu.⁵ There is also poetry. As Vico remarked, man is naturally a poet before

¹ For the literary renaissance associated with the Fulani *jihād*, see below, pp. 42–43. Unfortunately it has not been possible in the preparation of this anthology to use the rich collections of mainly nineteenth-century Arabic manuscripts deposited in the University College of Ibadan library and elsewhere. For information regarding this material, see W. E. N. Kensdale, *Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts preserved in the University Library, Ibadan, Nigeria*, Ibadan, 1955–8, and notes and references in H. F. C. Smith, 'Source Material for the History of the Western Sudan', *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, i. 3, Dec. 1958.

² Sect. VII, pp. 209–12.

³ Sect. VIII, pp. 322–3.

⁴ Sect. VII, pp. 198–205.

⁵ Sect. II, pp. 68–69.

he develops historical and philosophical forms of expression. The Kanuri praise-poems, addressed to particular dignitaries within the ruling hierarchy of Kanem-Bornu, are examples of a form of literature which is common throughout the western Sudan.¹ There are other poetic forms which are concerned less to celebrate institutions than to express personal attitudes to life—illustrated by Yoruba folk poetry, and by Muḥammad al-Kānami's ode, in a classical (or possibly Baroque) Arabic style, on his return from the wars to his capital, his people, and his wife.² Finally, there is a type of West African literature which follows European models fairly closely—as regards its form, though not necessarily its content: such as Olaudah Equiano's autobiography; Antera Duke's diary; Bishop Crowther's accounts of his missionary journeys; or J. Africanus Horton's proposals for West African political development, including the passages quoted here about Yoruba and Ibo national character.³

Is it possible to find any common characteristics running through these very diverse African contributions? Perhaps only that the authors had the kind of insight which went with participating in, and enjoying, the societies about which, and for which, they wrote. No outsider could possibly have described the Fulani educational system as it existed in the late eighteenth century in the way in which 'Abdullāh dan Fodio described his own education.⁴ This does not mean that African writers were wholly uncritical in their attitude to their own institutions. 'I am living on the fringe of the Sudan—the Sudan, where paganism and dark ignorance prevail; where, as Sheikh Maghili wrote, the better opinion is that ignorance, and lust, and irreligion are usual'—this was Muḥammad Bello's summing-up of the society in which he lived.⁵ But it meant that they tended to take for granted some of those aspects of their cultures which outside observers found particularly puzzling, or remarkable, or disturbing. This is less true, of course, in the case of African authors, like Olaudah Equiano or J. Africanus Horton, who were consciously writing for a European audience, for whom

¹ Sect. II, p. 70; Sect. V, pp. 133–4.

² Sect. VII, pp. 208–9.

³ Sect. VI, pp. 155–66; Sect. VII, pp. 181–5; Sect. VIII, pp. 243–5, 285–7.

⁴ Sect. VI, pp. 188–90.

⁵ Muḥammad Bello, *Infāq al-maysūr*, translated and paraphrased by E. J. Arnett as *The Rise of the Sokoto Fulani*, Kano, 1929, p. 3.

they felt it necessary to explain, and sometimes to justify, their civilizations.

The European contribution is, naturally, the most familiar of the three, for those brought up in the European cultural tradition. But it is a literature which is subject to certain obvious limitations. Geographically it is limited in range, until the beginning of the nineteenth century, to a small number of coastal towns and ports of call. Intellectually, most of the European travellers to West Africa were limited in their interests, and their accounts of the societies with which they came in contact were essentially answers to the questions which they raised. First and foremost their concern was with trade—initially in slaves, and later in palm-oil—and in topics related to trade: sources of supply, variations in the price-level, African consumption habits, types of currency, and the like. Their pre-occupation with trade implied an interest also in African systems of government, since in Benin, as European writers emphasized, foreign trade was a state monopoly, while in the Delta States European merchants had to conform to regulations imposed by the ruling dynasties (in Calabar, by the ruling oligarchy).¹ The existence from the time of the first Portuguese contacts with the West African coast, of a missionary motive, and the participation of Christian missionaries in the wake of traders in the effort to extend European influence, meant that European writers normally paid some attention also to African religion—though in most cases they lacked the equipment to understand it, and were mainly concerned to expose the ‘errors’ of its theology and the ‘barbarism’ of its practices, in contrast with their particular brand of the Christian faith. At the same time, like the Arabs, they were interested in ‘marvels’, *‘ajā’ib*—i.e. in those aspects of African culture which, judged from the standpoint of their own cultural assumptions, were especially odd, or ridiculous, or repellent. Within this general European frame of reference there were, of course, marked differences of perspective, connected with the writer’s nation, period, and personal outlook.

The major Portuguese writers of the period of Portugal’s commercial ascendancy on the coast, from the late fifteenth to

¹ K. O. Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta*, pp. 7–10, and extracts quoted below, *passim*.

the middle or end of the sixteenth century—de Barros, Ruy de Pina, Pacheco Pereira—were government officials and courtiers. And, though Pacheco Pereira was the only one of the three who actually served in West Africa, both de Pina and de Barros were closely associated with the making of imperial policy.¹ Hence all of them tended to reflect the standpoint of the régime—that the expansion of Portuguese trade in slaves and pepper, the diffusion of Portuguese culture, and the winning of African souls for the Catholic faith, were intrinsically desirable and related ends. They were interested in the promotion of cordial relations between the ruling dynasties and courts of Portugal and Benin; and the conversion of the prince—achieved at Warri, and even more successfully in the Kingdom of the Congo—was seen partly as a means to this end. None of the Portuguese authors attempted to probe at all deeply into African institutions for a variety of reasons: Pacheco Pereira's main object was to produce a guide to navigation; de Barros and his contemporaries 'saw the opening up of Africa primarily as the prologue to the discovery of the sea-route to India'; and there was the effect of 'the strict censorship imposed on any work that might assist Portugal's trade rivals'.²

The period of Dutch ascendancy, in the seventeenth century, coincided with the growth in western Europe of a scientific interest in the observation and description of phenomena, social as well as natural. There is a wide gulf between the intellectual climate of Sir Thomas Browne and John Locke. Applied to the study of non-European peoples this meant the substitution of more or less systematic accounts, inventories almost, of their physical environment, customs, and institutions, for the older 'travellers' tales' type of literature, with its pre-occupation with the unfamiliar and the exotic—the 'Anthropophagi and men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders'. This new approach is, I think, reflected in the accounts which the Dutch authors—'D. R.', Dapper, and Van Nyendael—who moreover lacked the strongly assimilationist, proselytizing interests of the Portuguese, give of the coastal states,

¹ J. W. Blake, *Europeans in West Africa, 1450–1560*, Hakluyt Society, London, 1942, i, p. 42.

² G. H. T. Kimble in Duarte Pacheco Pereira, *Esmraldo de Situ Orbis*, Hakluyt Society, London, 1937, p. xviii; J. W. Blake, *Europeans in West Africa, 1450–1560*, i, p. ix, and Freda Wolfson, *Pageant of Ghana*, London, 1958, p. 3.

and particularly Benin. Dapper's study of Benin is, perhaps, the first attempt by a European to penetrate below the surface, and describe objectively the institutions of a West African state. True, Dapper was a contemporary historian, not an anthropologist, and it would be of great value to have the original first-hand reports of Samuel Blomert, on which it appears that Dapper mainly drew.¹ But, like Leo Africanus, he remained a quarry from which later seventeenth- and eighteenth-century authors hewed extensively, usually without acknowledgement.²

The British contribution—even when allowance has been made for a natural bias in favour of one's own literature—is the largest and most varied. It begins with the records of Richard Eden and James Welsh in the sixteenth century, which supplement the Portuguese sources in regard to Benin. In the seventeenth century there is a curious lack of contemporary material: John Ogilby's *Africa*, published in 1670, is entirely derivative. For the eighteenth century there are some useful traders' narratives: particularly Robert Norris, who, though his first-hand knowledge was limited to Dahomey, is almost the only contemporary European source for the Oyo Empire in the mid-eighteenth century, and John Adams—excellent for the coastal states at the end of the century. In addition, much valuable material has been preserved in the massive eighteenth-century collections of 'voyages and discoveries'. Both in England and France this was a period when

the vogue of travel literature, which was outrun in popularity among the reading public only by theology, became firmly established. . . . The great booksellers could now find capital for large and expensive undertakings. . . . The imposing folios of Churchill, Harris and Osborne, adorned by numerous engravings, fitly furnished the libraries of Palladian country houses designed by Campell or Kent and decorated by Thornhill.³

¹ H. Ling Roth, *Great Benin*, Halifax, 1903, p. 2. See below, Sect. V, p.p 122–3, note 1.

² See Abbé Prévost, *Histoire générale des voyages*, The Hague, 1748, vi, book 11, ch. 1, pp. 1–5: 'Barbot même, qui avait fait le voyage de Guinée, ne peut passer que pour un compilateur, surtout dans sa relation de Bénin, où tout est emprunté de Nyendael et de Dapper, avec tant de mauvaise foi qu'il ne les a pas même nommés.' The Abbé is equally, but I think unfairly, severe about Dapper.

³ G. R. Crone and R. A. Skelton, 'English Collections of Voyages and Travels, 1625–1846' in E. Lynam (ed.), *Richard Hakluyt and his Successors*, Hakluyt Society, London, 1946, p. 78.

But it is not until the nineteenth century that the British sources become really impressive, with the records of the succession of journeys undertaken by Denham and Clapperton, Richard and John Lander, Laird and Oldfield, Allen and Thompson, Baikie, Barth, Richard Burton, Mary Kingsley, and many others. Among these Clapperton, Barth, and Mary Kingsley are, in their different ways, outstanding.

Denham and Clapperton were not the first Europeans to make their way to Bornu and the Hausa States by the trans-Saharan route—the German, Frederick Horneman, had preceded them by twenty years, and penetrated as far as Nupe.¹ But they were the first to return with a full and intelligent report on the civilizations of the central Sudan. Hugh Clapperton's great achievement was to follow this first successful northern journey with the first exploration of the route inland from the coast, through Yorubaland, to the Fulani capital of Sokoto, which he revisited in 1827, and where he died at the age of thirty-nine. Clapperton, though on the whole a careful observer, with scientific interests, was not an intellectual, as his unwillingness to become deeply involved in theological disputation with Sultan Muḥammad Bello makes clear.² But he was able to enter sympathetically into cultures remote from his own, enjoy them, and interpret them with a greater freedom from European preconceptions than most of his successors. His journeys took place at an exceptionally interesting time, when the Fulani Empire was already firmly established, Bornu under Muḥammad al-Kānāmī had achieved its renaissance, and the Empire of Oyo was already in a state of disintegration. Clapperton grasped, I think, the essential character of the historical processes in which he was involved, and learned much from his relationships with some of the main actors—Muḥammad Bello and Muḥammad al-Kānāmī in particular.

Henry Barth, German by birth and academic training but English by adoption, has a strong claim to be regarded as Nigeria's greatest historian, who—so far as northern Nigeria is concerned—constructed the frame of reference within which

¹ E. W. Bovill, *The Golden Trade of the Moors*, Oxford, 1958, p. 210. Unfortunately all that survives of Horneman's writings is his *Journal of Travels from Cairo to Mourzouk*, London, 1802.

² Sect. VII, pp. 213–14.

all later historical work has been done.¹ The accident which turned him, at the age of twenty-eight, from a lecturer on comparative geography and 'the colonial commerce of antiquity' at the University of Berlin into a member of James Richardson's expedition to the western Sudan was extremely fortunate. Though young when he started on his five-and-a-half-year journey, he already possessed the kind of intellectual equipment that no previous European traveller in this region had enjoyed—a classical scholar, modern linguist and Arabist, who had already travelled widely in North Africa, Asia Minor, and the Levant. When Barth arrived in Fulani territory in 1850, there had been no contact with Europe since Clapperton's last journey, twenty-three years previously. Barth was able to give a much more thorough and complete account of the institutions of the Fulani Empire and Bornu than his predecessors—as well as grasping more clearly their external links, with the Maghreb, and with Gao, Timbuktu, and the western Sudan (which he also visited). His account of the foreign trade of Kano is a good example of the imaginative way in which a student of 'the colonial commerce of antiquity' could set about fact-finding in West Africa.² But above all Barth had the temper and training which led him to ask historical questions of a kind no European had asked before. He never described the contemporary situation of the various African communities through which he travelled—Katsina, Kano, Sokoto, Bornu, Adamawa—without attempting to relate it to its past; so that his work, unlike almost all preceding European studies, is a work of exploration in a double sense—in time as well as in space. The fact that he was himself so clearly a *Mallam*, a man of learning, enabled him—as his account of his friends in Kūka illustrates³—at once to find common intellectual ground with the Mallams of the Sudan. One by-product of this was that he had access to—indeed, from a European standpoint, 'discovered'—some of the essential documentary sources for West African history, in particular the *Ta'rīkh as-Sūdān*.⁴

¹ See R. Mansell Prothero, 'Heinrich Barth and the Western Sudan', *Geographical Journal*, cxxiv. 3, Sept. 1958, pp. 326–39.

² Sect. VIII, pp. 257–62.

³ Sect. VIII, pp. 251–7.

⁴ E. W. Bovill in the *Geographical Journal*, loc. cit. See H. Barth, *Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa*, London, 1857–8.

Mary Kingsley was the last of the great European, as Leo Africanus was the last of the great Arab, traveller-reporters: the last European who could go where her genius led her, accepting Africans and accepted by them as a person among persons, without the privileges and embarrassments associated with membership of an imperial nation, and with a total disregard of what a European administration might think of her way of life. Such methods of exploration and study were still possible in the last decade of the nineteenth century, but not during the first half of the twentieth. In a sense she was also the first of the great West African anthropologists, in that her primary interest was to understand African societies from within—to explain African institutions in terms of their functions, in the context of a community's culture. Where previous European travellers had usually been content to give a crude description, and express moral disapproval, of the complex of rituals and beliefs associated with 'fetishism', Mary Kingsley's concern was to understand the various types of religious attitude so labelled in a spirit of scientific detachment. Hence her constant emphasis on 'science', as a prerequisite to effective political action, in Africa as anywhere else:

All that is wanted is the proper method; and this method I assure you that Science, true knowledge, that which Spinoza termed the inward aid of God, can give you. I am not Science, but only one of her brick-makers, and I beg you to turn to her. . .¹

In order to blow up the mythological foundations, the complacent assumption of cultural superiority upon which European thinking about Africa and Africans had come to be based, Mary Kingsley used all the intellectual weapons in her well-stocked armoury—wit, fantasy, paradox, hyperbole. But her most effective weapon was to fasten on the implicit major premiss—that African society is a thing apart, and African values by definition inferior to European values, and gently expose its inadequacy:

An African cannot say, as so many Europeans evidently easily can, 'Oh, that is all right from a religious point of view, but one

¹ Mary H. Kingsley, *West African Studies*, London, 1899, p. xvi. There is a perceptive note on Mary Kingsley in W. K. Hancock, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs*, Oxford, 1942, ii, part 2, appendix A, pp. 330–4.

must be practical, you know', and it is this factor that makes me respect the African deeply and sympathise with him, for I have the same unmanageable hindersome thing in my own mind, which you can call anything you like; I myself call it honour. . . .¹

Though in her own day she naturally regarded the further spread of European power in some form as inevitable, and sought to humanize and inform it, Mary Kingsley had no doctrinal stops in her mind that would have made her unsympathetic to the contrary trend of the present day, towards decolonization and independence. Indeed, she insisted on the need to apply what she called 'the African principle', the idea of 'the government of Africa by Africans', as far as the conditions of the time allowed.²

One weakness which runs through most of these European contributions—Barth is the outstanding exception—is the lack of a sense of history. The myth that Africans are 'people without a history', although it can be traced back at least as far as Hegel, was probably not a conscious European presupposition until the end of the nineteenth century. The fact was rather that most Europeans who visited West Africa were not competent, nor expected, to do more than report on the contemporary state of the societies which they encountered: they combined, in varying proportions, the qualities of journalists and amateur sociologists. Probably they assumed that these were—from a technological and institutional point of view—somewhat static societies; but then, until the end of the eighteenth century, their own societies changed relatively slowly too. Moreover, European historical thinking, as contrasted with the recording of past events, was itself largely a product of the nineteenth century.³ In these extracts changes in kings, or dynasties, or the power-relationships between states, wars, and revolutions—disturbances of the political surface—are recorded where they are observed. But the approach is, in general, photographic. Writers describe what has occurred within their span of observation. They may even refer back to previous travellers, and note ways in which the present state of affairs differs from the recorded past: mention that the city of Benin has declined since

¹ Mary H. Kingsley, *op. cit.*, pp. 127–8.

² *Ibid.*, p. 419.

³ R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, Oxford, 1946, pp. 259–60.

Dapper's day; or that Bonny has now established itself as the main centre of the slave-trade. But, before Barth, there is little attempt to discuss the direction of change, or explain the deeper causes of change.

Even the limited material included here refutes, I hope, fairly conclusively the theory that these African societies were 'static' or 'immobile' during the pre-colonial period. It may be worth while to try to list some of the main precipitants of change within the Nigerian region:

First, the movement into the area of migrating groups of peoples, or dominant minorities, mainly from the north and east, during a legendary period which can very roughly be identified with the latter part of the first millennium A.D.

Second, the gradual spread of Islam, first into Kanem-Bornu, and later into the Hausa States, from the eleventh century onwards; one consequence of which was the development of communications between this partly Islamized region and the wider Muslim world—the western Sudan, the Maghreb, Egypt, Arabia.

Third, the rise of the historically associated kingdoms of Oyo and Benin—both already well established by the fifteenth century.

Fourth, from the end of the fifteenth century, the beginning of commercial and cultural contacts between the coastal states and Europe, and the rise of new types of 'city-states', economically dependent on this trade.

Fifth, the Muslim reforming movement which expressed itself in the Fulani revolution at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and the consolidation of the Fulani Empire.

Sixth, the gradual substitution of 'legitimate' commerce for the slave-trade, as the basis of relations between the coastal states and Europe, during the first half of the nineteenth century;¹ and the break-through into the interior of European travellers, with trading, missionary, scientific, and political interests, variously combined.

Seventh, the final phase of European political and military penetration during the latter half of the nineteenth century,

¹ On the development of 'legitimate trade' between Britain and West Africa, see W. K. Hancock, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs*, Oxford, 1942, ii. 2, pp. 154-72.

with the reactions—whether of resistance or compromise—of the African states and their rulers.

In no sense, of course, is this an exhaustive list. But within this rough framework it is possible to say something about successive ‘periods’ of Nigerian history, and to note their different characteristics. Granted this notion of an historical ‘period’, and its subdivision into particular ‘centuries’, is somewhat artificial, yet it seems a necessary tool for interpreting the European past, and may be of use if applied to the Nigerian past.¹

Pre-A.D. 1000

For the period prior to the eleventh century almost our only sources are archaeological, supplemented by tradition and legend. It is for this reason that the book begins with a reproduction of one of the Nok sculptures. The dating of this extremely interesting Nok culture is not yet determined. Mr. Bernard Fagg has suggested that its most flourishing period may have been as early as the last few centuries B.C.; and that the Nok style of sculpture ‘is in some degree ancestral to the Ife-Benin tradition’.² But about this period we cannot do much more than speculate—at least until archaeological work, still in its infancy in West Africa, produces a more solid body of evidence. However, the ‘legends of origin’, of which a few examples are included here, do undoubtedly contain a core of history. The legends relating to the Hausa, Kanuri, and Yoruba peoples, in particular, seem to indicate that this was a period of *Völkerwanderung*; of migrations of conquering groups of peoples from the regions of the Sahara and the Nile valley; of the subjection, or absorption of indigenous or already established peoples; of the foundation of new dynasties; and of the importation of new institutions and techniques. (The Legend of Daura, for example, may record the introduction of the ass—‘the animal which was like a horse and yet not a horse’—and the substitution of a patriarchal for a matriarchal form of government.³) Beyond this it is difficult to go. It has often been said that the first millennium A.D.

¹ For the notion of historical ‘periods’, see R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, pp. 50–52.

² B. E. B. Fagg, ‘The Nok Culture in Nigerian Prehistory’, an unpublished paper given at the Fourth Congress of the Historical Society of Nigeria (1958).

³ Sect. I, pp. 54–56. See H. R. Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs*, Lagos, 1928, iii, p. 136.

was a period in which organized states were first established in the savannah region; and that 'white peoples'—Berbers, Arabs, and others—played a significant part in the state-forming process.¹ This is a doubtful hypothesis, developed at a time when dispersionist anthropology, and the idea of the 'white peoples' as the carriers of civilization, were much in vogue. Given that in some cases, for example Kanem and the Hausa States, Berber invaders probably played a part in the founding of new dynasties, organized states may well have been already in existence when the invaders arrived. There is at least no certain evidence to the contrary. The one firm point in the history of this period is al-Ya'qūbi's assertion that the Kingdom of Kanem existed in the ninth century.² It is also worth remembering that whatever political transformation occurred at this time took place among societies which had already been profoundly influenced by two great technical revolutions—the spread of the knowledge of the working and use of iron, and the development of trans-Saharan communications, based upon the introduction of the camel into North Africa, early in the Christian era, replacing the earlier cart traffic.³

Eleventh to fourteenth centuries

By the eleventh century pre-history begins to give way to history. Perhaps the first event in Nigerian history to which a reasonably accurate date can be assigned is the conversion to Islam of Umme Jilmi, Mai of Kanem, shortly before the end of

¹ For speculations on this subject see M. Delafosse, *Haut-Sénégal-Niger*, Paris, 1912; Y. Urvoy, *Histoire de l'empire du Bornou*, Paris, 1949, and *Histoire des populations du Soudan central*, Paris, 1936; J. D. Fage, *Introduction to the History of West Africa*, Cambridge, 2nd ed. 1959, where he partially follows Delafosse, and *Ghana, a Historical Interpretation*, Madison, 1959; S. O. Biobaku, *Lugard Lectures*, 1955, Lagos, 1955, dealing with Yoruba origins, and H. R. Palmer, *passim*.

² On the basis of king-lists Urvoy refers the foundation of the Saifawa dynasty in Kanem to about the year A.D. 800 (*Histoire de l'empire du Bornou*, p. 26). Mr. H. F. C. Smith, however, has pointed out in correspondence that the year 800, or the eighth century, may 'represent a frontier of Islamic knowledge and interest rather than a real watershed of political organisation'.

³ For the introduction of the camel into North Africa, and its use for trans-Saharan transport, with approximate dating, see E. W. Bovill, *The Golden Trade of the Moors*, Oxford, 1958, pp. 41–49; for evidence regarding trans-Saharan cart traffic, *ibid.*, pp. 16–18; R. Mauny, 'Une Route préhistorique à travers le Sahara Occidental', *Bulletin de l'IFAN*, ix, 1947, pp. 341–57, and J. D. Fage, *Ghana, a Historical Interpretation*, pp. 8–9 and 90.

the eleventh century.¹ For al-Bakri, writing a generation before Umme Jilmi, Kanem was still a kingdom of 'idolatrous Negroes', although exposed, like the Kingdom of Ghana at the same date, to Muslim influences—illustrated by his interesting story of the presence there of some 'Umayyad' refugees, 'who still preserve their Arab mode of dress and customs'.² By the twelfth century Mai Dunama, Umme Jilmi's successor, was the first ruler of Kanem to fulfil the religious obligation of the *hajj*—since that time one of the main channels of communication between the central Sudan and the Middle East.³ By the middle of the thirteenth century, according to Maqrīzī, the Maliki school of law was firmly established in Kanem; and, probably in the reign of Mai Kashim-Biri, its government built a *madrasah* for Kanem pilgrims and students residing in Cairo.⁴ Ibn Khaldūn provides us with independent evidence of the development of Kanem's external relations with other Muslim states at about this time in his account of the embassy which Kanem sent to Al-Mustansır, the founder of the Hafṣid dynasty in Tunisia, and the public excitement aroused by the gift of a giraffe.⁵ One practical consequence of this continuing friendly relationship between Kanem and the Hafṣids was the strengthening of Kanem's authority over the Fezzan, meaning increased security for the North African trade-route.

Internally it is possible to piece together a reasonably coherent account of the state of Kanem-Bornu at this period: the Mai, whose legitimacy is based on the Arab, non-African, principle of heredity in the paternal line, but who retains much of his pre-Islamic divinity, and 'never shows himself to his people, nor talks to them, except from behind a curtain';⁶ the focus of an elaborate palace hierarchy within which the queen-mother, the *Magira*, occupied a position of special power; the great feudatories, princes of the royal family for the most part, governors (probably absentee?) of the provinces from which they took their titles—*Kaigamma*, *Yerima*, *Galadima*—who constituted at the same time the Council of State;⁷ a substantial feudal army, the instrument from the twelfth century of Kanem's

¹ Sect. II, pp. 68–69.

² Sect. II, p. 68.

³ Sect. II, p. 71.

⁴ Sect. II, p. 77.

⁵ Sect. II, pp. 74–75.

⁶ Sect. II, p. 74.

⁷ See Urvoy, *Histoire de l'empire du Bornou*, p. 37, and sources quoted there. For the Council of State at a much later period, see Sect. VIII, pp. 290–3.

policy of expansion; a state capital at Njimi, though the Mai remained 'a nomad in mode of life'—that is, like the rulers of Ethiopia until the seventeenth century, or of England in the early Middle Ages, he was continually on the move through his dominions. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries this first Kanem-Bornu Empire included peoples in varying degrees of dependence and vassalage, stretching as far as Kano in the west and Wadai in the east. But the fourteenth century was the beginning of a period of decline, involving conflicts within the dynasty, the loss of the original Kanem provinces east of Chad, and the shifting of the centre of gravity of the state westward to modern Bornu.

Elsewhere the evidence is much more fragmentary. The Hausa States were at least partially within the sphere of influence of Kanem-Bornu. But Kano, in particular, was of growing importance: it seems reasonable, following *The Kano Chronicle*, to place the building of the walled city some time in the twelfth century, and the introduction of Islam by Mali missionaries, and the conversion of the dynasty, in the fourteenth.¹ The fact that Islam spread to the Hausa States from the west, and that the early contacts of the Hausa peoples with the Muslim world were by way of the western Sudan and the Maghreb, left its mark on the subsequent history of the region.² To the south the kingdoms of Oyo and Benin, with Ife as their common religious and cultural centre, were emerging during this period. The great period of Ife sculpture, and the later introduction of the technique of brass-casting from Ife into Benin, probably belong to the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries.³

Fifteenth century

In the fifteenth century three developments stand out: the rise of the Hausa States, at a time when Kanem-Bornu was passing through a period of relative weakness; the expansion of the kingdoms of Oyo and Benin; and the arrival of the Portuguese.

¹ Sect. II, pp. 72, 75–76.

² See J. Greenberg, *The Influence of Islam on a Sudanese Religion*, New York, 1946, and J. Schacht, 'Islam in Northern Nigeria', *Studia Islamica*, viii, 1957, pp. 123–46.

³ Sect. II, p. 73, and references to R. E. Bradbury, *The Benin Kingdom*, cited there. See also W. Fagg, *The Sculpture of Africa*, London, 1958, pp. 55–66.

In the continual competition for power which took place among the Hausa States, Zaria for a time achieved predominance, under the semi-legendary Queen Amina, who, according to *The Kano Chronicle*, 'conquered all the towns as far as Kwara-rafa and Nupe'.¹ But Kano, where iron helmets and coats of mail were introduced by the Sarki (King) Kanajeji in about A.D. 1400, strengthened its position in the course of the century, and Muhammad Rimfa (?1463–99) is remembered in history as the greatest of the pre-Fulani Kano kings.² It is probably to his reign that Leo Africanus refers when he says that the King of Kano 'was in times past of great puissance, and had mighty troops of horsemen at his command'.³ The twelve reforms which *The Kano Chronicle* attributes to Rimfa seem mainly to have been directed towards strengthening the internal structure of the State and intensifying its Islamic character: for example, the extension of the city walls, the construction of the market, the appointment of eunuchs to offices of state, the introduction of *kulle* (purdah), and the public celebration of the '*Id al-kabīr*', the major Muslim festival. There is other evidence of the further Islamization of Kano at about this time: the arrival of Fulani from the west, bringing with them works of theology and grammar, to supplement the Qur'an and the *Hadīth*; and the visits of travelling Muslim scholars from the University of Timbuktu. From the end of the fifteenth century onwards, 'the influence of Timbuktu . . . in the full tide of its intellectual activity . . . spread slowly through the west and central Sudan . . .'.⁴ One interesting aspect of this closer relationship between Kano and the intellectual centres of the Muslim world was the friendship between Muhammad Rimfa and Sheikh Muhammad al-Maghili of Tlemcen. Al-Maghili, a major figure in the history of the western Sudan at the turn of the fifteenth century, and a powerful influence on the thinking of 'Uthmān dan Fodio and the Fulani leaders three centuries later, seems to have functioned for a time in Kano as an *éminence grise*, advising the king on statecraft, and addressing to him the

¹ Sect. III, p. 80. There is doubt about Queen Amina's date: she is sometimes referred to the sixteenth century.

² Sect. III, pp. 89–90.

³ Sect. IV, p. 102.

⁴ M. Hiskett, 'Material relating to the State of Learning among the Fulani before their *jihād*', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, xix. 3, 1957, p. 573.

treatise on *The Obligations of Princes*—which combines insistence on the strict application of the *Shari'a* with an awareness of the problems facing a centralizing and reforming Muslim ruler.¹

Two states to the south of the Hausa system which by this time had begun to play a part in recorded history were Nupe and Kororafa (the Jukun Kingdom)—the one lying north of the Niger, above the confluence with the Benue, the other based upon the valley of the Benue. Both were ruled by pagan dynasties of divine kings. There are grounds for believing that a Nupe state existed—with its centre farther north, in the region of modern Kontagora—at a much earlier period; but that it was refounded in the fifteenth century, and that it is to this refounding that the story of Tsoede, the ‘mythical charter’ of modern Nupe, relates.² The early history of Kororafa is also obscure. The state is first referred to in *The Kano Chronicle* in the reign of Yaji, in the late fourteenth century, who is said to have made war against Kororafa and to have died there.³ During the fifteenth century Kororafa had not yet been welded into the powerful system which, later, was able to threaten or overrun the Hausa States, and appears as tributary either to Zaria or to Kano.⁴

During the fifteenth century both Oyo and Benin appear to have been passing through a period of military expansion. By the time the first Portuguese arrived in Benin the Alafin of Oyo was already regarded as the ruler of a powerful empire, ‘the lord of many peoples’.⁵ Possibly Shango, the deified Alafin, the inventor and strategist who perished by his own *hubris*, can be associated with this phase of Oyo history.⁶ Ewure the Great, historically a more definite and datable figure, achieved a similar reputation as a subtle prince, ‘a great magician, physician, traveller, and warrior’, in the early period of Benin’s expansion among the Ibo peoples west of the Niger.⁷ While the maximum extension of the Benin Empire, eastward as far as Bonny and westward to Lagos, belongs to the sixteenth century,

¹ Sect. III, pp. 90–91.

² Sect. III, pp. 81–83, and S. F. Nadel, *A Black Byzantium*, Oxford, 1942, ch. vi. For such evidence as exists regarding pre-Tsoede Nupe, see Dietrich Westermann, *Geschichte Afrikas*, Cologne, 1952, pp. 194–5; also Sect. II, p. 73.

³ H. R. Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs*, Lagos, 1928, iii, p. 106.

⁴ Sect. III, pp. 79–80. See also C. K. Meek, *A Sudanese Kingdom*, London, 1931, pp. 24–25.

⁶ Sect. III, pp. 84–86.

⁵ Sect. III, p. 94. (But see accompanying note.)

⁷ Sect. III, pp. 86–87.

when Benin had begun to exploit the advantages derived from its European trade, particularly the use of fire-arms, the Benin tradition, which makes the first phase of expansion pre-date the arrival of the Portuguese, can be accepted as correct.

For present purposes we must reject the Europe-centred approach implied in talking about 'the discovery' of West Africa, or Nigeria, or Benin. From the African standpoint, it was not the Portuguese who first 'discovered' Benin, but Benin which first 'discovered' the Portuguese—according to tradition, in the reign of Ewuare the Great. About the actual date of this first encounter there has been some controversy. Professor Blake accepts in substance Antonio Galvão's account—that Ruy de Sequeira reached Benin in 1472, more than a decade before the first contact to which de Pina and de Barros refer, when João Affonso d'Aveiro presented his credentials at the court of Benin, some time between 1483 and 1486.¹ By the end of the century, as Pacheco Pereira makes clear, the peoples of the Niger Delta had also 'discovered' the Portuguese; diplomatic relations had been established between the kings of Benin and Portugal; the Portuguese had built their factory at Gwatto, as a base from which to develop trading and missionary activities; and slaves—sold at twelve to fifteen brass bracelets in Benin and eight to ten copper bracelets in the Delta—had already become the staple export, with pepper, ivory, palm-oil, leopard-skins, &c., as subsidiaries.²

Sixteenth century

The sixteenth century is relatively rich in material, at least as regards Bornu, the Hausa States, and Benin. Essentially this was the period of the renaissance of Bornu, and the organization of the second Kanem-Bornu Empire; of the increased military pressure and cultural influence of the Gao Empire, under the Askia dynasty, upon Hausaland; and, in the south, of the extension of the imperial frontiers and authority of Benin—which, while maintaining close commercial relations with Portugal, made its first contacts also with other European nations, in particular the English and the Dutch.

¹ J. W. Blake, *Europeans in West Africa*, Hakluyt Society, London, 1942, i, pp. 6–13.

² Sect. III, pp. 87–88, 92–95.

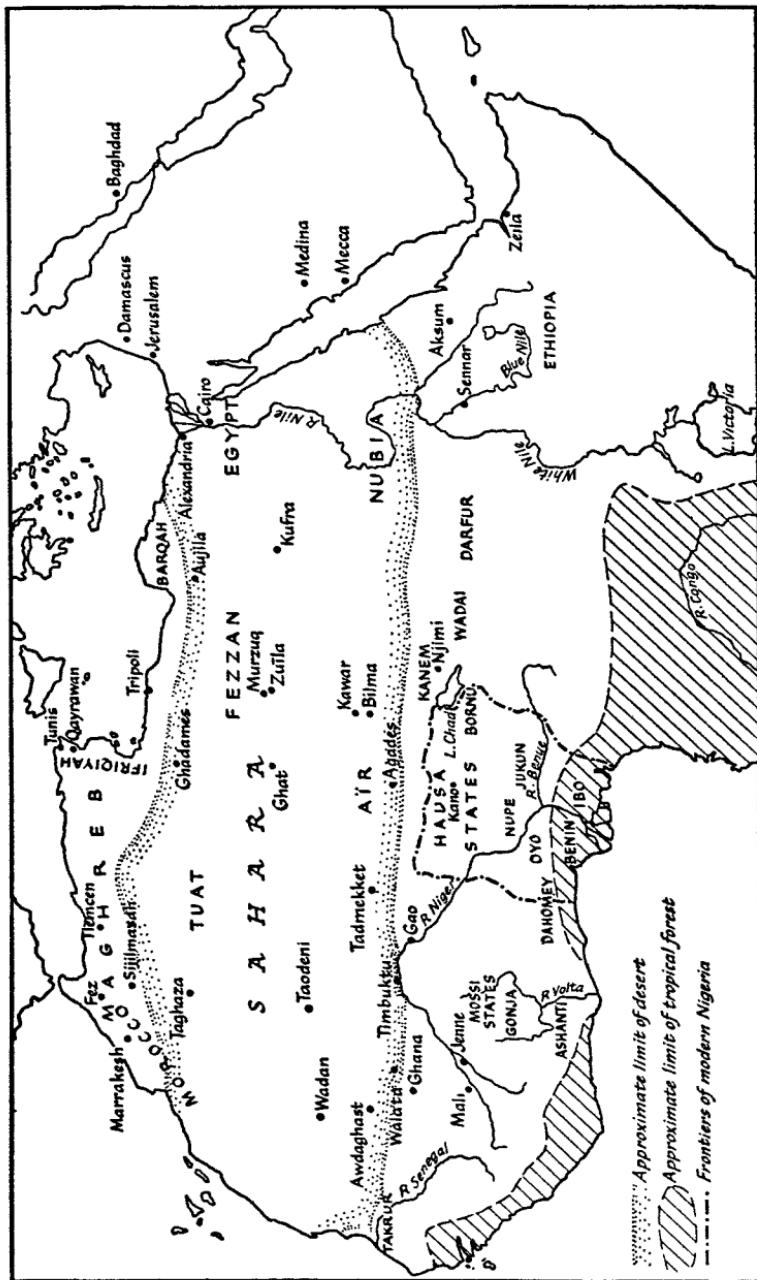
Leo Africanus, writing near the beginning of the century, speaks of Bornu as third in order of importance among the major states of the Sudan—coming after Gao and Gaoga.¹ He stresses the importance to Bornu of the trans-Saharan trade—especially the export of slaves and the import of horses; the part played in the trade by visiting North African merchants; the wealth of the royal house; and the strength of the royal army, which made possible these annual slave-raiding expeditions.² His statement that the people of Bornu were pagans might seem to conflict with the fact that Islamization had been going forward there for more than four centuries. But it may well be true, if applied to the mass of Bornu subjects, rather than to the dynasty and court officials. Throughout the history of the Sudan the spread of Islam appears to have followed a definite rhythm—periods of intensive Islamization alternating with periods of the resurgence of animism. As late as the beginning of the nineteenth century Sultan Muḥammad Bello claimed that the majority of Bornu people were *kuffār*, pagans. But the end of the sixteenth century coincided with a new phase of religious reform and political reconstruction, under the leadership of the greatest of the Bornu Mais, Idris Alooma, who recovered the lost provinces of Kanem, and extended the frontiers farther eastwards, probably as far as Darfur.³ Ahmad Ibn Fartua, Idris Alooma's chief Imam and chronicler, who accompanied him on his campaigns, is especially valuable as a contemporary historian, because—though his main theme is battles and victories—he has also taken the trouble to record some of the reforms and technical developments of his time: the new emphasis upon the *Shari'a*, and the transfer of judicial authority from tribal chiefs to *qādīs*; the introduction of Turkish muskets and the raising of a local corps of musketeers—a major factor assisting Idris Alooma's policy of imperial expansion; the adoption of new methods of military transport; the construction of red-brick mosques.⁴ And even Ibn Fartua's somewhat repetitive descriptions of successive campaigns give a marvellous

¹ Jean-Léon l'Africain, *Description de l'Afrique* (translated and edited by A. Epaulard, Paris, 1956), i, pp. 9–10. Gaoga (not to be confused with Gao) lay east of Kanem.

² Sect. IV, pp. 103–5.

³ See A. J. Arkell, *History of the Sudan*, London, 1955, pp. 211–13.

⁴ Sect. IV, pp. 114–16.



I. The Nigerian region in relation to West and North Africa

picture of late sixteenth-century Bornu society in one of its main aspects—the life and activities of its feudal army.¹

From their first appearance in history the Hausa States were subject to constant pressure from more powerful states on both sides: to the east, Kanem-Bornu; to the west, Mali, and later Gao (often itself referred to by the Hausa chroniclers simply as 'Mali', in the sense of 'the Western Empire'). By the year 1500 Gao, under Askia the Great, was dominant throughout the western Sudan; and the states of Kano, Katsina, and Zaria became for a time formally subject to the Gao Empire, paying tribute to the Askias, and compelled to accept a resident agent of the imperial power.² However, Gao's suzerainty was not maintained throughout the century. Katsina recovered its independence at any rate by 1554, the date of the heroic resistance of the Gao cavalry at the battle of Karfata, described in the *Tarikh as-Sūdān*.³ Moreover, the new state of Kebbi—founded, according to tradition, in 1516 by Kanta, a dissident general and provincial governor under Askia the Great—became in the course of the century a major power, functioning as a kind of buffer between Gao and Bornu.⁴ Gao's impact upon the Hausa States at this period was in any case not merely political and military: fertilized by visiting scholars from the University of Timbuktu, Katsina in particular began to develop as a secondary centre of learning.

In the sixteenth century Benin achieved something like the same kind of predominance in the south as Bornu in the north. But, whereas in the case of Bornu the principal non-African power with which diplomatic relations were maintained, and from which muskets and missionaries could be secured, was the Ottoman Empire, in Benin's case it was Portugal. (It might even be worth speculating, if the main focus of technical and industrial development over the next four centuries had been Turkey and the Middle East, rather than western Europe, how would this have affected the course of Nigerian history?) Accounts of the exchange of ambassadors between the courts of

¹ Sect. IV, pp. 110–13.

² Sect. IV, pp. 102–3. Leo Africanus's account of the conquest of Kano, Katsina, Zaria, and Zamfara, by Muhammad Askia seems convincing, though these events are not reported in the Songhai *tarikhs* (in particular the *Tarikh as-Sūdān*), nor, less surprisingly, in *The Kano Chronicle*.

³ Sect. IV, p. 107.

⁴ Sect. IV, pp. 105–6.

Benin and Portugal occur both in the Portuguese historians and in Benin tradition. Indeed, the latter supplements the former in an interesting way—giving the name of the first Benin ambassador to Portugal, Ohen-Okun of Gwatto, the nature of the royal presents, and the location of the first Christian churches.¹ From Duarte Pires's letter to King Manuel it seems that a semi-permanent Portuguese mission was established at Benin.² This letter is described by Professor Blake as 'the only known contemporary account of direct negotiations between the King of Benin and the Portuguese living in his country. It should, however, be regarded as an illustration of what was constantly happening rather than as a story complete in itself'.³

Although, from a political and commercial standpoint, Portuguese influence in Benin had begun to decline by the middle of the century, its culture remained a force. Portuguese missionaries seem to have enjoyed a large measure of freedom of worship and propaganda in Benin itself—the Catholic religion being regarded as an addition, rather than an alternative, to the state religion. Richard Eden, in his account of Windham's voyage in 1553—which contains the first description of an actual interview with the King of Benin—states that 'he himselfe could speake the Portugall tongue, which he had learned of a child';⁴ and similar references to the use of Portuguese at the court of Benin recur in the literature of the next two centuries. At the human level there is evidence of friendly relations between Obas and individual Europeans: as in the case of Affonso d'Aveiro, who died in Benin, and 'was buried with great lamentations by the Oba [Esigie] and the Christians at Benin City'; or James Welsh, who presented a telescope to the Oba Ehangbuda, and described the people of Benin as 'very gentle and loving'.⁵

Seventeenth century

There is a strange shortage of material on which to base an understanding of the seventeenth century. One significant change, however, was the shift in the direction of the trans-Saharan trade, after the defeat of Askia Ishaq II by Moroccan

¹ Sect. IV, p. 98.

² Sect. IV, pp. 99–100.

³ J. W. Blake, *Europeans in West Africa, 1450–1560*, Hakluyt Society, London, 1942, i, p. 61.

⁴ Sect. IV, p. 109.

⁵ Sect. IV, pp. 98, 116–17.

forces at the battle of Tondibi, in 1591, and the consequent break-up of the Gao Empire. Tondibi, where mainly Spanish renegado troops under Judar Pasha demonstrated the superiority which fire-arms and the solution of the problems of trans-Saharan transport gave them, certainly deserves to be counted among the decisive battles in West African history.¹

This collapse of the western Empire brought with it unprecedented prosperity [for Katsina]. The anarchy prevailing in the Niger bend diverted to Katsina, now the commercial centre of the Hausa States, the caravans which had formerly followed the route from Gao to Egypt. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries marked the height of its power. But, having once become rich and powerful, . . . Katsina was involved in frequent conflicts with its neighbours—Kano, Kebbi, . . . and perhaps above all Kororafa. . . .²

Relations between Kano and Katsina, from the fifteenth century to the nineteenth, took the form of a continuing struggle for control of the central Sudanese end of the trans-Saharan trade, in which—as in the struggles between medieval Genoa and Venice—each in turn achieved a temporary supremacy. By the seventeenth century Kano was in a position of relative weakness—exposed to attack from Bornu in the east and Kebbi in the west, as well as involved in intermittent conflicts with Katsina. In the latter half of the century the Kororafa (Jukun) wars were renewed, leading to the destruction and occupation of the city of Kano. Katsina, on the other hand, though also exposed to periodic Kororafa invasions, was more successful in maintaining its independence; and in 1650, after inflicting a defeat on Kano, made an alliance, countersigned by three of the '*ulāma'*, against the common, pagan enemy.³ Nominally, as Barth points out, Katsina remained tributary to Bornu throughout the period, but this seems to have involved little more than a formal recognition of overlordship such as in Europe a sovereign Christian king might give his emperor.⁴ In Bornu itself the extensive empire which Mai Idris Alooma had constructed remained intact, at least until the middle of the century,

¹ E. W. Bovill, *The Golden Trade of the Moors*, Oxford, 1958, chs. 16 and 17.

² Y. Urvoz, *Histoire des populations du Soudan central*, Paris, 1936, p. 237.

³ H. R. Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs*, Lagos, 1928, iii, p. 121.

⁴ Sect. V, p. 119.

when it began to weaken under the combined attacks of northern Tuareg and southern Kororafa. Mai 'Ali's victory over both forces, celebrated in Dan Marina's poem, seems only to have checked a gradual process of decline.¹ Internally, as the 'Song to the Kaigama' makes clear, the Bornu State had achieved greater centralization through the system whereby slaves—instead of princes of the royal house as in earlier times—were appointed to the chief offices of state.²

In the south the two major powers—Oyo and Benin—maintained their ascendancy: they were, at this period, subject to no serious external threats, and—partly perhaps on account of their common acceptance of the religious supremacy of Ife—there appear to have been no continuing conflicts between them. The view that the Oyo Empire had already begun to decline by 1700 seems to lack any basis of fact. According to Oyo tradition, by the late seventeenth century the imperial frontiers extended to the Niger in the north and east, and included Dahomey in the west. Internally the power of the Alafin was severely limited by the Basorun and the Council of State, who made full use of the traditional procedure of 'rejection', described by Johnson.³ But this does not appear to have involved any weakening of the authority which the Alafin's government exercised over the Oyo dominions.

In Benin the highly complex political system, which the Dutch observers describe—with its various 'Estates', or associations of title-holders, pivoting upon a sacred monarchy and a palace bureaucracy—remained efficient, and well adapted to carry out the various public functions required of it—land distribution, the control of local administration, war, foreign trade, taxation, state ceremonial, and the like.⁴ It is only in Van Nyendael, writing at the end of the century, that there is evidence of decline. By 1700 Benin had become involved in civil war and the city was partly depopulated—primarily as a consequence of the state's effort to satisfy the expanding European demand for slaves:

The profits from the trade with Europeans gave the rulers and merchants of Benin an incentive and also, in the form of fire-arms, the means, to extend their rule so that they could secure from their

¹ Sect. V, p. 132.

² Sect. V, pp. 133–4.

³ Sect. V, pp. 137–8.

⁴ Sect. V, pp. 119–30; Sect. VI, pp. 145–52.

own territory the exports most in demand. Armies were continually sent out to capture slaves and to subjugate the small tribes of the Niger delta. . . . By the end of the seventeenth century . . . the continual warfare was destroying the prosperity and even the structure of the State. . . .¹

This weakening of the power and coherence of Benin was, however, an intermittent process. 'Between periods of dissension the kingdom seems to have shown remarkable powers of recovery. . . . The history of Benin is one of alternating periods of territorial expansion and contraction in accordance with the degree . . . of authority at the centre.'² During the greater part of the seventeenth century the process of expansion was still continuing.

Farther south Warri, the kingdom of the Itsekiri—founded, according to tradition, by Giniwa, the son of an Oba of Benin who had to flee from the city in the mid-fifteenth century—had by the seventeenth century achieved a measure of independence from Benin. As Dapper puts it, 'The King of Ouwerre is the ally and in some manner the vassal of the King of Benin, but in other respects is entirely absolute in his dominions'.³ Warri is interesting partly because Portuguese-Catholic culture sank deeper roots there than in Benin, or anywhere on this coast, involving for a time the conversion of the dynasty. This is reflected in the story of Antonio Domingo, Olu in the 1640's, whose father 'went to Portugal to be educated and returned with a Portuguese lady of high birth as his wife';⁴ and in the rational bargain struck a generation later between Church and State, whereby the then reigning Olu agreed to practise monogamy on condition that the Capuchin Vice-Superior provided him with a white wife.⁵

This was also the period of the rise of the Delta States—Brass, Bonny, and Old Calabar—the product of migrations: initially, in the case of Brass and Bonny, of Ijaw, coming possibly

¹ J. D. Fage, *Introduction to the History of West Africa*, Cambridge, 2nd ed., 1959, p. 92.

² R. E. Bradbury, *The Benin Kingdom*, Ethnographic Survey of Africa, Western Africa, XIII, London, 1957, p. 21. ³ Sect. V, p. 131.

⁴ P. C. Lloyd, *The Itsekiri*, Ethnographic Survey of Africa, Western Africa, XIII, London, 1957, p. 181. See also P. C. Lloyd and A. F. C. Ryder, 'Don Domingos, Prince of Warri', in *Odu*, Ibadan, No. 4, 1957.

⁵ Sect. V, pp. 138–40.

from Benin; later of Ibo from the hinterland. 'By the end of the sixteenth century the process of forming the city-states may be said to have been complete. From the seventeenth century on the Delta became the most important slave mart in West Africa.'¹ James Barbot gives a lively account of the procedures of negotiation and trade between the Pepple dynasty and European merchants, as they operated at the end of the century.²

Eighteenth century

There is a tendency to regard the eighteenth century as a period of decline, or at least of a weakening of established political systems, which eased the way for the empire-building movements at the beginning and end of the succeeding century, Fulani and British. There are obvious dangers in this method of interpreting history backwards: reality was certainly much more complicated. Unfortunately there is a lack of contemporary historians for this period who can tell us how the situation appeared to them; and little of the contemporary material that has survived is as yet accessible.

In the north, it is true, the power of Bornu was much reduced.

All the princes of this epoch stayed quietly in their capital, N'gazargamu, or their favourite residence, Gambaru. And all of them died in their capital—a bad sign. They lived on the memories of ancient glories, blinded by the flattery of courtiers, absorbed in state ceremonial and the infinite quarrels of Kaigamas, Mestremas, Chiromas, Galadimas, of generals without armies and governors without provinces. Meanwhile the nomads [the Tuareg] harassed the north of the Empire, and vassal tribes stealthily freed themselves from their old bonds of subjection.³

M. Urvoy's reconstruction may seem highly coloured. But he may be right in arguing that the frequent references in the state chronicles through the century to Mais who were 'pious', 'friends of science and religion', 'well-disposed towards the '*ulama'*', indicate a period of relatively ineffective rulers, in which power tended to pass into the hands of the Mallams and

¹ K. O. Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830–1885*, Oxford, 1956, pp. 24–25.

² Sect. V, pp. 140–2.

³ Y. Urvoy, *Histoire de l'empire du Bornou*, Paris, 1949, p. 86.

the palace bureaucracy. But even in its decline, as Sultan Muḥammad Bello admitted, Bornu retained its importance as a centre of Islamic culture.¹

For the situation in eighteenth-century Hausaland we are largely dependent upon the accounts of early nineteenth-century Fulani authors, who naturally, in order to justify their *jihād*, painted a gloomy picture of moral and political degeneration, of a recession of Islam, and a resurgence of animism.² This presentation, though one-sided, is not altogether unfair. The eighteenth century seems in fact to have been a period when Islam was on the ebb in this region. Katsina, though still a flourishing centre of international trade and Muslim learning, was of minor importance politically—and was exposed to intermittent attacks from the northernmost of the 'true' Hausa States, Gobir, which by 1764 had annexed its neighbour, Zamfara, and established itself as the dominant Hausa power.³ Gobir was a state with a predominantly pagan population, whose ruling dynasty, though formally Muslim, appears to have had leanings towards the beliefs of the mass of its subjects. Within this Hausa society it was particularly the Fulani elite who preserved the 'Timbuktu tradition' of Sudanese scholarship, and occupied key posts within the Muslim hierarchy—as Qadis, Qur'anic teachers, Imams, and the like.⁴ 'Uthmān dan Fodio, who received his main education from his master, Mallam Jibrīl, at Agades—a centre of communications and learning on the southern fringe of the Sahara—was a member of this Fulani elite, one of the Toronkawa, a clan which had originally migrated from Futa Toro, in Senegal.⁵ Like many of the Fulani intelligentsia, he was a member of the *Qadiriyya*—the religious Order which had originally been introduced into West Africa in about A.D. 1500, but which underwent a renaissance in the eighteenth century under the leadership of al-Mukhtār ibn

¹ Muḥammad Bello, *Infaq al-maysur* (translated by E. J. Arnett), Kano, 1929, pp. 8–9.

² e.g. Sect. VII, pp. 191–4.

³ Y. Urvoy, *Histoire des populations du Soudan central*, Paris, 1936, p. 247. For the distinction between 'true' and 'false' Hausa States, see below, Sect. I, p. 56, note 1.

⁴ M. Hiskett, 'Material relating to the State of Learning among the Fulani before their *jihād*', *SOAS Bulletin*, xix. 3, 1957, p. 575.

⁵ Sect. VI, pp. 188–9.

Aḥmad.¹ During the 1780's and 1790's 'Uthmān was employed by successive kings of Gobir as tutor to the royal children. The conflict which eventually broke out between the animist-inclined Gobir dynasty and the puritan Fulani 'ulama' precipitated the militant reforming movement of the first decade of the nineteenth century, which had such a profound effect on states and peoples throughout a large area of Nigeria.

The major power in the south was still Oyo, which maintained its ascendancy over Dahomey by regular military campaigns, and, after 1747, by the exaction of regular tribute, with the threat of invasion to enforce it.² Contemporary European commentators were impressed by the size and efficiency of the Oyo army³—as well as by the system whereby defeated generals were expected to commit suicide, and were in any case not permitted to return to Oyo. They were interested also in the constitutional checks on the power of the monarchy—expressed, in the last resort, through the institution of 'parrots' eggs'—while noting that by the 1770's there had been a movement towards absolutism, a strengthening of the power of the Alafin in his relations with the governing class.⁴ Professor Fage has suggested that the principal cause of the break-up of the Oyo Empire after 1800 was the fact that already, by the latter part of the eighteenth century, it was overstretched. The continual wars against Dahomey, whose primary purpose was to obtain slaves to satisfy the expanding European market, the tendency of Oyo generals to set themselves up in conquered areas as independent powers, the weakening of the traditional checks on the power of the Alafin—all tended to disturb the equilibrium of the Oyo political system. 'Superficially the power of Oyo seemed intact, but in reality the subject peoples and their governors were chafing under the oppressive control of the Alafin and Oyo officials. They were jealous of the fact that the wealth from commercial and military operations in which they had assisted seemed to flow to the

¹ See A. Gouilly, *L'Islam dans l'Afrique occidentale française*, Paris, 1952, part ii, ch. 2, for a brief discussion of the spread of the *Qadiriyya* in West Africa. For 'Uthmān dan Fodio's connexions with the Order, see A. Brass, 'Eine neue Quelle zur Geschichte des Fulreiches Sokoto', in *Der Islam*, x, 1920; also J. S. Trimingham, *Islam in West Africa*, Oxford, 1959, p. 94, and references cited there.

² Sect. VI, p. 169.

³ Sect. VI, pp. 171–2.

⁴ Sect. VI, pp. 169–70.

capital alone.¹ A similar process of disruption had begun earlier and gone farther in Benin—though no doubt, as Olaudah Equiano indicates, Benin continued to enjoy a shadowy kind of overlordship in territories which had formerly been included in its empire.²

In the eighteenth century the slave-trade was organized on a larger scale than at any previous time. Captain Adams's figure of 370,000 Ibo slaves sold in the Delta markets over a period of twenty years—equal to about one-quarter of the total export from all African ports—gives some idea of the scale of human wastage.³ About the effects of the traffic on the structure of Ibo society we know extremely little—beyond the fact that it stimulated the rise of a class of local middlemen, partly Aros, who owed their predominance to their manipulation of the Aro-Chuku oracle.⁴ The situation in the Delta States is a good deal clearer. The economic dependence of these states on the European trade contributed to the growth of strong centralized forms of government—either monarchical, as under the Pepple dynasty, or oligarchic, as at Old Calabar, where effective power was exercised not by the kings of the four trading towns, but by the all-pervading Egbo society. Underpinning both types of government was the 'House system'—'the pivot of Delta social organization'. Professor Dike has described the 'House' as 'at once a co-operative trading unit and a local government institution'—controlled by wealthy merchants (including the merchant-king), with a membership of hundreds or thousands of slaves, bound together by a common loyalty and a common system of rewards and punishments, a 'hierarchy with numerous gradations', offering a commercial career open to talents.⁵ While during the eighteenth century these states remained resistant to any kind of European political penetration, their long-standing, and often very friendly, relations with the European traders who lived alongside of them naturally promoted a two-sided process of cultural borrowing—reflected in the adoption by the African ruling class of European styles of dress and domestic equipment, the development of commercial

¹ J. D. Fage, *Introduction to the History of West Africa*, Cambridge, 2nd ed., 1959, pp. 90–91.

² Sect. VI, p. 156.

³ Sect. VI, p. 178.

⁴ Sect. VIII, pp. 270–2. See also K. O. Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830–1885*, Oxford, 1956, pp. 37–41.

⁵ K. O. Dike, op. cit., pp. 32–34.

pidgin and of European-type education. It was to this literate conservative merchant oligarchy, with its habits of conspicuous consumption, that Antera Duke of Calabar belonged.¹

Nineteenth century

The difficulty in discussing the nineteenth century arises from the abundance of material, not from its lack—including the extensive Arabic literature to which this anthology, unavoidably, fails to do justice; and from the fact that it is only recently that detailed studies of particular phases and topics have been put in hand. Moreover, in the existing histories, accounts of this century, more perhaps than of any other, have tended to adopt a European frame of reference. Professor Dike's study of the changing pattern of institutions in the Delta States so far stands by itself. There has been no comparable treatment as yet of the nineteenth-century history of Lagos or Benin, or of the various systems—the Egba State apart—which developed out of the wreck of the Oyo Empire. Little attention has been given—except in Dr. Ajayi's valuable account of the Christian Missions—to the evolution of a new Western-educated elite. For the north there has been no adequate study of the Fulani revolution, nor of the organization and later history of the Fulani Empire, nor of Bornu under the al-Kānamī dynasty. This is a field in which almost everything remains to be done. For the moment all that can be attempted is to point to some of the themes that stand out in the history of the century.

In the early part of the century the dominant theme is clearly the Fulani revolution. While its deeper causes remain obscure, the revolution itself can be regarded in three ways. It can be seen as an episode in the secular process by which the ideas and institutions of Islam have been established, renewed, and spread in Africa south of the Sahara, from the period of the Almoravids on.² In this respect it can be compared with reforming movements in other parts of the Muslim world during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—the *Wahhābiyya* in Saudi Arabia, the *Sanūsiyya* in Cyrenaica, Hajj 'Umar al-Tall's movement in the western Sudan, the *Mahdiyya* in the eastern Sudan. There is broadly the same kind of revivalist impulse; the idea of

¹ Sect. VI, p. 181.

² A. Gouilly, *L'Islam dans l'A.O.F.*, Paris, 1952, part i.

a return to the Qur'ān and the Sunna; the effort to restore the Islamic State in its original purity; the emphasis on moral austerity; and the use of the *jihād* as a legitimate instrument of reform.¹ But the ideas of the Fulani revolution, and of 'Uthmān dan Fodio in particular, though having parallels elsewhere, deserve closer study than they have yet received: dan Fodio's liberal attitude to the education of women, for example, expressed in the passage quoted from *Nūr al-albāb*.²

At the same time the special position which the Fulani '*ulamā'* occupied in the Hausa States, as an intellectual elite, with 'a sense of cohesion', and 'a degree of organising ability and political acumen above that of the Hausa aristocracy', needs to be borne in mind.³ In this respect the revolution was an expression, if not of Fulani 'nationalism', at least of the sense of common purpose which a group with ties of education, culture, and ideology, as well as language and kinship, is liable to generate. Indeed—as Europeans like Henry Barth who travelled widely in the western and central Sudan realized—the revolution in Hausaland was part of a general drive to extend Fulani power throughout the region. The establishment by Sheikh Ahmadu of the theocratic state of Massina on the upper Niger in about 1810 was another phase of the same broad movement.⁴

Seen from another standpoint the revolution depended for its dynamic, at least in the early stages, on the fact that—like other Muslim reforming movements of this period—it had a genuine popular basis. Its appeal was not limited to the Fulani '*ulamā*', nor even to the wider body of Fulani cattle-herding nomads who had settled in the Hausa States: indeed, initially by no means all the Fulani supported it. It also represented a protest of the Hausa commoners (*talakawa*) against the old Hausa dynasties—against the oppression of the ruling class as much as against its 'paganism', or lack of orthodoxy.⁵ The kind

¹ See, for example, H. A. R. Gibb, *Modern Trends in Islam*, Chicago, 1947; W. Cantwell Smith, *Islam in Modern History*, Princeton, 1957, ch. 2; P. M. Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan*, Oxford, 1958, especially the Introduction.

² Sect. VIII, pp. 194–5.

³ M. Hiskett, 'Material relating to the State of Learning among the Fulani before their *jihād*', *SOAS Bulletin*, xix. 3, 1957, p. 576.

⁴ See Sect. VIII, p. 254; also A. Gouilly, *L'Islam dans l'A.O.F.*, Paris, 1952, pp. 71–72, and A. H. Ba and J. Daget, *L'Empire Peul du Macina* (I.F.A.N., Etudes Soudanaises, No. 3, Koulouba, 1955).

⁵ This social aspect of the Fulani *jihād* is especially emphasized in an interesting

of state which the leaders of the revolution were pledged to establish was a state in which social justice, administered in the light of the *Shari'a* by God-fearing rulers, took the place of the arbitrary decisions of irresponsible despots. Though the popular character of the revolution no doubt became increasingly less evident once it had succeeded—after 1809, when the old dynasties had been largely replaced by new rulers drawn from the Fulani elite, and 'Uthmān dan Fodio retired from public life—there is plenty of evidence in the literature of the range of its early appeal:

In the beginning he ['Uthmān dan Fodio] did not address himself to the Kings. After a time his people grew and became famous, till they were known in Hausaland as 'the People'. Men kept leaving their countries and coming to him. Of the ruling classes some repented, and came to him with all they possessed, leaving their Sultans. Then the Sultans became angry....¹

The most obvious consequence of the Fulani revolution was the imposition of the authority of a single government over a large region formerly occupied by a number of competing sovereign states. It was not simply the Hausa States that were brought into this new system. By a combination of political infiltration and military force, the Fulani Empire pushed its frontiers forward into territories that had hitherto been relatively little exposed to Islamic influences—as far as Nupe and Ilorin in the south-west and Adamawa in the deep south-east. The motive for this expansion was certainly partly religious—to extend the frontiers of Islam. But it was also partly economic, to control fresh sources of supply—particularly of the supply of slaves from pagan territories, to work as agricultural labour on the estates of the ruling class.² Mid-nineteenth-century travellers, like Barth, Bishop Crowther, and Allen and Thompson, make clear that this Fulani-Islamic frontier was still being pushed southwards, even at that date—penetrating into the states on both sides of the Benue, Igbira, Igala, and Idoma.³

article by D. A. Olderogge, 'Feodalizm v Zapadnom Sudane v 16-19vv.', in *Sovetskaya Etnografiya*, No. 4, 1957, pp. 91–103 (summarized in *African Abstracts*, x. 1, Jan. 1959, pp. 11–12).¹ Sect. VII, p. 193.

² See particularly Sect. VIII, pp. 265–6 and 317–20. Here and elsewhere in this section I have found M. G. Smith's *Government in Zazzau*, Oxford, 1960, extremely helpful.

³ Sect. VII, p. 250; Sect. VIII, pp. 269–70.

Barth refers to an expedition from Adamawa into Ibo territory, and speaks of the influence of the Fulani Empire being felt 'as far as the Bight of Benin'.¹

European commentators have tended to underestimate the extent to which the Fulani Empire survived through the nineteenth century as an effective political unit.² It was, of course, a state of a broadly 'feudal' type, in which the various provincial governors, or Sarkis, enjoyed a large autonomy, and revolted from time to time against the central power; but it remained discernibly a state. This is brought out particularly clearly by Monteil, who travelled through the Empire as late as 1891, and gives a useful account of the various types of control which the central government at Sokoto was able to exercise, even during a period of relative weakness: through the investiture of provincial governors; through the appointment of their chief ministers; through regular tours of inspection conducted by representatives of Sokoto; and through the obligations of tribute and military levies.³ In addition the *Sarkin Musulmi*—who, apparently, only assumed the title of Sultan in the later period of the Empire—enjoyed an admitted spiritual supremacy which reinforced his secular power.⁴

While our relative ignorance of conditions in the Hausa States of the eighteenth century makes comparisons difficult, it seems clear that one consequence of the establishment of a unified political system, providing a reasonable degree of internal security, in a region which had formerly been controlled by petty warring states was an expansion of internal and foreign trade. Here Barth's detailed analysis of the industry and trade of Kano in the middle of the century is, as far as I know, the first serious attempt to estimate the global income of a West African city.⁵ But the first European travellers were impressed also by the flourishing commercial conditions which they found in outlying centres of the Empire—at Raba, the Nupe capital,

¹ Sect. VIII, p. 266.

² For a recent example see J. S. Trimingham, *Islam in West Africa*, Oxford, 1959, p. 142.

³ Sect. VIII, pp. 316–17.

⁴ 'The Sultans of Sokoto and Gwandu (who are cousins) have considerable power over the outlying provinces which are under their respective spiritual jurisdictions.' *Report by Major Macdonald of his Visit as Her Majesty's Commissioner to the Niger and Oil Rivers*, Confidential, 5913, March 1890, p. 20.

⁵ Sect. VIII, pp. 259–60.

for example, 'the goal of the huge caravans', bringing potash, camels, horses, ostriches, and manufactured goods from Kano, Bornu, Chad, and North Africa.¹ Though the Arab merchants whom these Europeans encountered were justified in regarding them as potential rivals, it was not until the end of the century that the developing coastal trade succeeded in finally putting the established trans-Saharan trade out of business, thus cutting the commercial connexions between the Fulani Empire and the Arab world.

One other important consequence of the Fulani revolution—as of the reforming movement associated with the Askias three centuries earlier—was the new stimulus which it gave to learning and literature. 'Uthmān dan Fodio, his brother 'Abdullāh, and his son Muḥammad Bello, were Muslim scholars first and foremost, and only in a secondary sense political or military leaders.² Hence it was natural that they should impose Arabic, the language of Islam, as the official and literary language throughout the Empire. Moreover, they and their chief associates were faced with new situations, demands, and problems, which impelled them to write—the need to explain and justify their revolution; to reform government and morals; to educate their followers in the traditional Islamic sciences; to record the past—especially their own revolutionary and post-revolutionary history; to develop an adequate system of internal communications. These needs help to explain what Mr. Charles Smith has called 'the extraordinary outpouring of Arabic writing during the period c. 1800–1850'. As Hajji Sa'īd says of Muḥammad Bello:

He was much occupied with composition, and whenever he composed anything he used to issue it to the people, and read it to them, then become occupied with another composition. . . . If he was asked about a question he composed a composition on it, and if it reached him that so-and-so and so-and-so were disagreeing on a question he composed a composition on it. . . .³

Smith and Kensdale have in fact listed ninety-three titles of works by Muḥammad Bello—Kensdale has listed eighty-five works by 'Uthmān dan Fodio and seventy-five by 'Abdullāh.⁴

¹ Sect. VII, pp. 239–43. See also S. F. Nadel, *A Black Byzantium*, Oxford, 1942, p. 85.

² Sect. VI, pp. 188–90, and Sect. VII, pp. 196–8.

³ Sect. VII, p. 220.

⁴ W. E. N. Kensdale, 'Field Notes on the Arabic Literature of the Western

These lists are certainly not exhaustive; contemporary northern Nigerian scholars put the totals much higher. What is important, however, is not the sheer quantity of output, but the intellectual renaissance which made such intensive literary activity possible.

Another theme is the history of Bornu. What is especially interesting here is the way in which this ancient state succeeded in withstanding Fulani pressure. Instead of disintegrating, or becoming annexed to the Fulani Empire as its north-eastern province, as seemed likely during the Fulani wars of 1805–12, Bornu in fact entered upon a new period of reconstruction and reform under the leadership of Muḥammad al-Kānamī. Al-Kānamī is one of the outstanding characters in Nigerian nineteenth-century history, about whom it would be desirable to know a great deal more—though Denham and Clapperton, who paid a lengthy visit to his new capital at Kūka in 1823, provide valuable first-hand information.¹ Like ‘Uthmān dan Fodio, he was essentially an ‘ālim, a Muslim scholar, but with closer connexions with the Arab world: though, as his name implies, he was of Kanem origin, his mother came from Zuwila in the Fezzan; he himself had made the *hajj* and resided for long periods in Medina and Egypt.² He was initially brought in to organize Bornu resistance to the Fulani invasions in about 1809, after Mai Ahmad had been driven into exile, and his capital N’gazargamu occupied by a Fulani force. But it was not until 1814, after the greater part of the kingdom had been liberated (though Katagum and Hadejia in the extreme west became permanent fiefs of the Fulani Empire) that al-Kānamī took over full control of the state, and remained its effective ruler until his death in 1835.³ During this period, and indeed until 1846, the representatives of the Saifawa dynasty maintained a shadowy existence—preserving the title of ‘Mai’, and the rituals and ceremonies traditionally associated with the monarchy, on condition of good behaviour. Al-Kānamī acted as a kind of Mayor of the Palace, remaining content with the title of *Shaikh* (or *Shehu*), carrying with it the idea of spiritual

Sudan’, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Oct. 1955; Apr. 1956; Apr. 1958. See also p. 10, n. 1.

¹ Sect. VII, pp. 205–8.

² Y. Urvoy, *Histoire de l’empire du Bornou*, Paris, 1949, p. 100. For Muḥammad al-Kānamī’s later career, see *ibid.*, pp. 101–8.

³ D. J. Stenning, *Savannah Nomads*, Oxford, 1959, pp. 30–35.

authority rather than worldly kingship, the title by which 'Uthmān dan Fodio and Muḥammad Bello were also generally known. (There were indeed marked resemblances between the political attitudes of al-Kānamī and Muḥammad Bello—both Muslim reformers and centralizing administrators—in spite of the continuing conflicts between their two states.) Eventually, in 1846, this dual system broke down in Bornu—when Mai Ibrāhīm plotted with the Sultan of Wadai to overthrow the power of Shaikh 'Umar: the forces of Wadai were defeated; Mai Ibrāhīm executed; and the Saifawa dynasty, after enduring for a millennium, came to an end.¹

There is a good deal of interesting evidence—in Barth and in Nachtigal, for example—regarding the state of Bornu, as it functioned during the long reign of Shaikh 'Umar, son of Muḥammad al-Kānamī, from 1835 to 1880. What seems clear is that, though the new capital of the new dynasty, Kūka, flourished as a centre of international trade and Muslim culture, power tended—as in the later period of the Saifawas—to pass back into the hands of slave officials, the *Kachellawa*, palace eunuchs, and individual favourites of the Shaikh, such as Hajj Bashir and, at a later period, Laminu.² The reforming effort exhausted itself with the death of al-Kānamī. When, at the end of the century, Bornu was again confronted with an external threat to its survival—the expanding frontiers of the British, French, and German empires—more formidable than Fulani expansionism, the system again depended on a political and military leader imported from outside—Rabeh.³ The cases of Muḥammad al-Kānamī and Rabeh are not, of course, quite parallel. Al-Kānamī built up his power gradually, as a servant of the ruling dynasty, through his military achievements; Rabeh came as a conqueror, defeating Shaikh Hāshim at the battle of Ngala in 1893. Al-Kānamī, in spite of his Arab connexions and training, was a man of Bornu; Rabeh was a foreigner, from Sennar in the eastern Sudan, the leader of a small but efficient military force, on the basis of which, like

¹ For a brief account of these events, see S. J. Hogben, *Muhammadan Emirates of Nigeria*, London, 1930, p. 192; for a fuller account, see Y. Urvoy, *Histoire de l'empire du Bornou*, Paris, 1949, pp. 109–11.

² Sect. VII, pp. 254–7, 290–3.

³ No adequate life of Rabeh exists. See Urvoy, op. cit., pp. 126–30, and references cited there; also Sect. VIII, p. 320, n. 3.

Samory in the far west, he built up a 'mobile empire'. None the less there were resemblances between the two situations. Both illustrate the close associations which have existed, through recorded history, between Bornu and the Arab East. In fact to speak of Rabeh as a 'foreigner' in Bornu is only partially true. In both cases the power of the new ruler, or 'dictator', depended on his organizing and administrative ability, and on the consent of the governed, not on sheer military force. Gentil, who directed the operations which ended in Rabeh's defeat, brings out this point particularly clearly.

He [Rabeh] . . . left the local chiefs in charge of their various districts . . . but made them subordinate to his own chief officers, who took his orders. . . . He carried out a plan for a public exchequer, to cover the maintenance of his troops, . . . the erection of healthier and more comfortable buildings, and the storing of provisions with a view to future campaigns. . . .¹

Gentil adds the interesting remark that, having defeated Rabeh, the French found themselves obliged to take over his system of administration. It was Rabeh's misfortune, as Urvoy points out, to come to power at the wrong time, when no reforming ruler of an ancient African state—Menelik of Ethiopia apart—could resist for long the pressure of the European Powers, with the clear superiority of their military techniques.

While in Bornu the reaction to Fulani expansion was a reorganization of the state which ensured its survival for the best part of a century, the effect upon Oyo was to speed up the process of disintegration. It is difficult to assess the relative importance of internal strains and external Fulani pressure in causing the final break-up of the Oyo Empire. In the case of the defection of Ilorin, which seems to have been an important immediate cause of disintegration, both factors were involved. The decision of Afonja, the military governor of Ilorin, in about 1817, to break with Oyo and establish his own independent power would not necessarily in itself have been disastrous; such defections had occurred in the past. But this break occurred at a time when Oyo was faced with a dynamic expansionist empire on its northern frontier. Hence Afonja's co-operation with the Fulani Mallam, Alimi, the movement into Ilorin of

¹ Sect. VIII, p. 321.

the *jama'a*—Hausa and Fulani bands from the north, with Yoruba Muslims—to form the basis of its army, and the transformation of Ilorin, first into an advance base for operations against Oyo, and eventually into a Fulani fief governed by the descendants of Alimi—these developments left Oyo gravely weakened.¹ Old Oyo, the capital, could no longer be held. Its exposed situation, in the north of the Empire, seems to have been connected with the period when 'light and civilization with the Yorubas came from the north. . . . The centre of life and activity, of large populations and industry, was therefore in the interior. . . .'² Moreover, as Dr. Ajayi has pointed out, the military power of the Oyo Empire in the days of its greatness had been based on its cavalry—and horses came from the north. 'The Fulani conquest of Ilorin was dangerous to the continued existence of the Empire not only because it divided the Yorubas . . . but also because it controlled the northern trade routes and the supply of horses.'³

Clapperton and the Landers had the interesting opportunity of travelling through Yorubaland during this period of disintegration, in the 1820's, when the Fulani military frontier had been pushed forward into Ilorin, but the Alafin remained in his capital at Old Oyo, the titular head of a shadowy empire. They were struck particularly by the apparent lack of any effort on the part of the old regime to organize effective resistance, and foretold the doom of the system.⁴ This prophecy was not entirely correct. True, under Abdussalami, the first Fulani Sarki, Ilorin pursued a more aggressive policy, with the result that Old Oyo was finally destroyed, and the Alafin killed by Ilorin forces, in 1835, and the capital subsequently transferred a hundred miles south, to modern Oyo. Effectively this marks the end of the Oyo Empire, though Atiba, who was installed as Alafin at modern Oyo, attempted to maintain the dignity and ceremonial of an office that had ceased to possess any real basis of power.⁵ But the system did not simply disappear. Rather it

¹ S. J. Hogben, *Muhammadan Emirates of Nigeria*, London, 1930, pp. 151–6.

² Samuel Johnson, *History of the Yorubas*, London, 1921, p. 40.

³ J. F. A. Ajayi, 'Christian Missions and the Making of Nigeria, 1841–1891', unpublished thesis, London University, pp. 42–43.

⁴ Sect. VII, pp. 227–9.

⁵ Ajayi, op. cit., pp. 46–48. See also Samuel Johnson, op. cit., part ii, ch. 15.

broke up into a number of minor systems preserving in a modified form political institutions which had existed under the old Oyo Empire. Hence, from the 1830's on, the history of Oyo becomes the history of its successor states: Ibadan, where the city developed out of a military camp in about 1829; the Egba state, with its capital at Abeokuta, founded by Shodeke in about 1830, and peopled largely with Egba refugees from Ibadan; Ijaye; and Ijebu—which claimed that it had never been subject to the overlordship of Oyo, and largely controlled the supply of guns and gunpowder from the coast.¹

Why did the Yoruba, who at an earlier period of history had developed a powerful imperial state, fail to achieve any measure of political or military unity when confronted with the threefold pressure of the Fulani Empire in the north—somewhat relaxed after the defeat of Ilorin at the battle of Oshogbo in 1843—of Dahomey in the west, and of the British—especially after the annexation of Lagos in 1861—in the south? Various partial explanations have been suggested: the continuing conflict between Ibadan and the Egba state over trade and the trade-route to the coast; intensification of slave-raiding within Yoruba territories, once the Fulani occupation of Ilorin had cut off northern sources of supply; the strength of the new loyalties which developed within the successor states, and the particularist outlook and ambitions of their ruling classes.² But the question is one that has not yet been satisfactorily answered.

The detailed histories of the successor states and their conflicts need not concern us. What comes out fairly clearly in these records is that the breakdown of the old political order did not mean the breakdown of all order. Clapperton, travelling through Yoruba country in 1826, commented on the degree of 'subordination and regular government' which he found.³ The established specialized crafts of the Yoruba towns, and the established trade connexions—both within Yorubaland, and between Yorubaland and Dahomey, Gonja, Ashanti, Nupe, and Bornu—seem on the whole to have been maintained through the period of

¹ S. O. Biobaku, *The Egba and their Neighbours, 1842-1872*, Oxford, 1957, ch. 1.

² S. O. Biobaku, op. cit., pp. 12-14 and 96-97; J. D. Fage, *Introduction to the History of West Africa*, Cambridge, 2nd ed., 1959, p. 91; Alan Burns, *History of Nigeria*, London, 1948, pp. 126-9.

³ Sect. VII, p. 223.

invasion and internal war.¹ But, Dr. Ajayi has pointed out, one consequence of the loss of Ilorin and the pushing southwards of the Fulani frontier was a shift in the Yoruba centre of gravity and the direction of their trade and communications. Put crudely, the Yoruba attempted to compensate for their losses in the north by developing closer relations with Europe and the coast—importing European muskets and gunpowder, and, after 1841, admitting European missionaries and *Saro*.²

The varying reactions of African states and peoples to the expanding European frontier—or rather, to the various types of European frontier, missionaries', traders', and administrators'—is another theme which runs through these nineteenth-century extracts.³ It is worth remembering how little the basic pattern of relationships between West Africa and Europe changed during the first half of the century, a period when in fact the export of slaves reached a higher level than ever previously, and the various European expeditions into the interior—though significant from the European standpoint—made no appreciable impact upon African society. Europeans were now in a better position to observe the course of African history, but not materially to influence it. It was only during the second half of the century that the old systems began to be seriously disturbed, in very varying degrees in different areas—by the substitution of palm-oil for slaves as the basic export; the penetration of European missionaries and, more slowly, traders; and the growth of European political intervention, involving as its consequence the loss, or weakening, of African sovereignty. The causes of these changes have been discussed at length elsewhere: here all that matters is their results.

From about 1850 on the expanding European frontier, in one form or another, became a fact which African states and their rulers had to face, and which they faced in a variety of ways. They might, like Benin, withdraw into isolation; or, like Ijebu, preserve an established tradition of isolation—

¹ See W. Bascom, 'Urbanization among the Yoruba', *American Journal of Sociology*, lx. 5, Mar. 1955, pp. 446–54.

² Returning emigrants from Sierra Leone, usually liberated slaves.

³ Professor W. K. Hancock's conception of 'frontiers', elaborated in his *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs*, ii, part i, Oxford, 1940, pp. 1–28, and applied to the history of Britain's relations with West Africa in part ii (Oxford, 1942) remains extremely useful if one is attempting to view the processes of change from the African end.

simply telling the European to keep out, so long as they had power to do so. Or they might, like William Dappa Pepple in Bonny, attempt to preserve the pattern of African-European relationships as they had existed over the past three centuries—accepting the necessity for close commercial relations, but resisting any encroachment upon the power and prerogatives of the dynasty, or the merchant-oligarchy.¹ In Pepple's case the attempt failed. But in states less immediately exposed to political pressure than Bonny, this distinction between economic and political frontiers could be maintained, for a period, where it suited both parties. Nupe, for example, under King Masaba was brought partially within the European economic frontier, while remaining wholly within the politico-religious frontier of the Fulani Empire.² In this situation the military power of Nupe could be strengthened, for a time, by the import of European guns. Another type of reaction was the passing of power from the old dynasties into the hands of new men who succeeded, in this period of *stasis*, by their sheer ability; either—like Ja-Ja of Opobo³—building up new states, or—like Rabeh in Bornu or Nana in the Benin River⁴—reorganizing existing states on more efficient lines. Finally, in some cases—the Egba state under the influence of the immigrant *Saro* is perhaps the best example—there was a conscious attempt to maintain independence by borrowing and adapting Western institutions.⁵

One other theme that becomes increasingly important during the latter half of the century is the rise of an African 'middle class'. Admittedly, the term is a vague one: it might be argued that African capitalists operating within the traditional system, who made their own way up the economic and social ladder, like the 'Winnaboes' of Brass, could be so described, as contrasted with large traders who were at the same time members of ruling families, like Madam Tinubu.⁶ But I am using the term here in a more restricted sense, to mean those Africans who achieved

¹ Sect. VII, pp. 236–9, and Sect. VIII, pp. 283–5.

² Sect. VIII, pp. 293–5.

³ Sect. VIII, pp. 303–8.

⁴ Sect. VIII, pp. 320–1 and 308–9.

⁵ For the Egba United Board of Management, which began to function in 1865, see S. O. Biobaku, *The Egba and their Neighbours, 1842–1872*, Oxford, 1957, ch. 7. There is a somewhat fuller and more sympathetic account in J. F. A. Ajayi, 'Christian Missions and the Making of Nigeria, 1841–1891', pp. 453–66.

⁶ Sect. VIII, pp. 297–9 and 277–8.

status within the new European framework of institutions: who were educated in mission schools; who were strongly influenced by the beliefs and values of the Christian Churches of the nineteenth century; who earned their living in what, in the context of nineteenth-century Europe, were typically middle-class ways—as ministers of religion, teachers, civil servants, merchants, or—in rare cases—lawyers and journalists; who developed a recognizably middle-class type of family and social life. It would be misleading to refer to this group simply as ‘westernized’—since a certain superficial ‘westernization’ had, as some of the passages quoted here illustrate, been taking place in the coastal towns since the sixteenth century.¹ Moreover, members of this group were not necessarily ‘westernized’ in the sense of having lost contact with, or interest in, the African societies to which they belonged. Often, as in the case of Samuel Johnson, the historian of the Yoruba, the reverse was the case.

This African ‘middle class’ naturally tended to develop in those centres in which European institutions, especially Missions and Mission schools, were earliest and most solidly established—for example, Lagos, Abeokuta, Calabar. It included within it—as a kind of catalyst—the Sierra Leonean and Brazilian immigrants, or returning emigrants, who began to establish themselves in these centres in the early 1840’s, moving roughly with the expanding missionaries’ frontier.² What distinguished this elite from other African elites—representatives of the old ruling families, like the Peoples in Bonny or the Honestys in Calabar, or new self-made rulers like Ja-Ja—was that its members had acquired European intellectual skills, and in general took for granted the desirability of the spread of institutions of a ‘European’ type—Christian Churches, Western education, technology, industry and commerce, modern communications, efficient administration, and so forth. They did not regard these developments as necessarily implying the extension of European power—as the controversy within the Anglican community over the appointment of a European bishop to succeed Bishop Samuel Crowther indicates.³ But

¹ e.g. Sect. V, p. 151.

² See Ajayi, op. cit.: ch. 2 for the returning emigrants, ch. 5 for the ‘emerging African middle class’.

³ Sect. VIII, pp. 309–11.

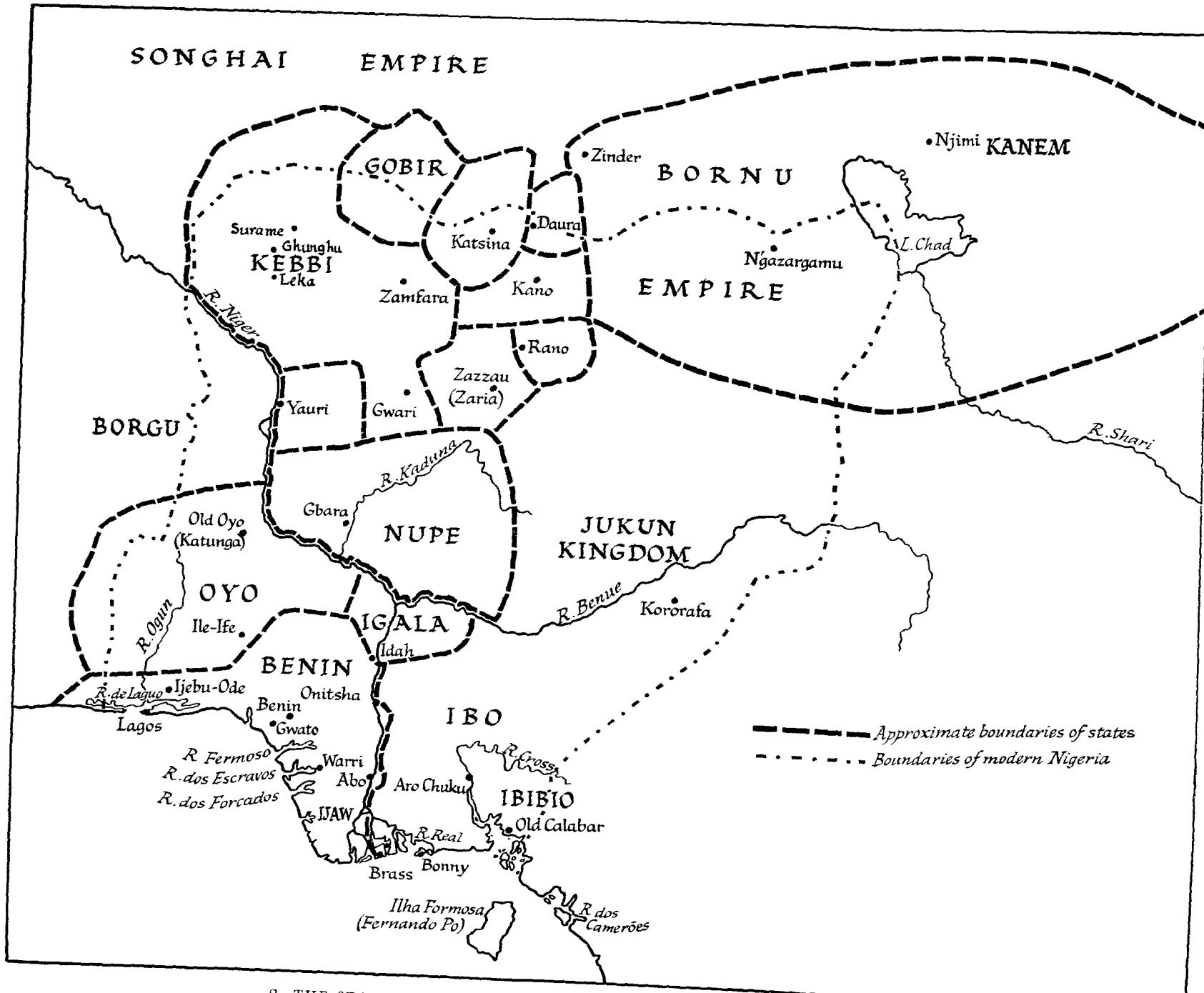
their opposition to European power, where it occurred, was based on a totally different set of moral and political assumptions from those which inspired the resistance of the pre-colonial rulers and ruling classes—whether these were the chiefs of Brass defending their traditional economic rights, or the rulers of the Fulani Empire defending Islam.¹ With the appearance of this elite, which in essentials accepts the new system, but appeals to democratic ideas to support its claim for responsibility within the system, we begin to move into another historical period—the period of the rise of modern nationalism.

One general point seems worth making in conclusion. The two major empire-building movements which marked the beginning and end of the century—Fulani and British—had more in common than is sometimes realized. Both succeeded in imposing, by a combination of diplomacy and military force, the authority of a single government over a large, politically heterogeneous, region. Both derived their dynamic from a missionary impulse—the idea of the construction of an Islamic state, on the model of the early Caliphate, in the one case; of the spread of Christian civilization, European commerce, and British justice, in the other. For both this sense of mission was accompanied by a certain contempt for the institutions of the supposedly ‘backward peoples’, whose moral and social standards it was the conquerors’ duty to raise. Both movements promoted an intellectual renaissance, through a revival of Islamic learning, in the tradition of Timbuktu, in the Fulani case; through the diffusion of Mission-sponsored education, in the tradition of Bell and Lancaster, in the British. Of course there were also important differences, both of policy and practice: between ‘Uthmān dan Fodio’s conception of a theocratic state and Lord Lugard’s principle of ‘indirect rule’; between the tendency of the Fulani ruling class to intermarry with their subject peoples—especially the Hausa—and the tendency of British administrators to preserve their cultural identity and social separateness. Probably the biggest difference was in the economic field. While the Fulani system appears to have stimulated commerce, and to some extent production, the effect of the British system was in this respect much more far-reaching—bringing with it a new technology, quickening the

¹ Sect. VIII, pp. 311–13 and 322–3.

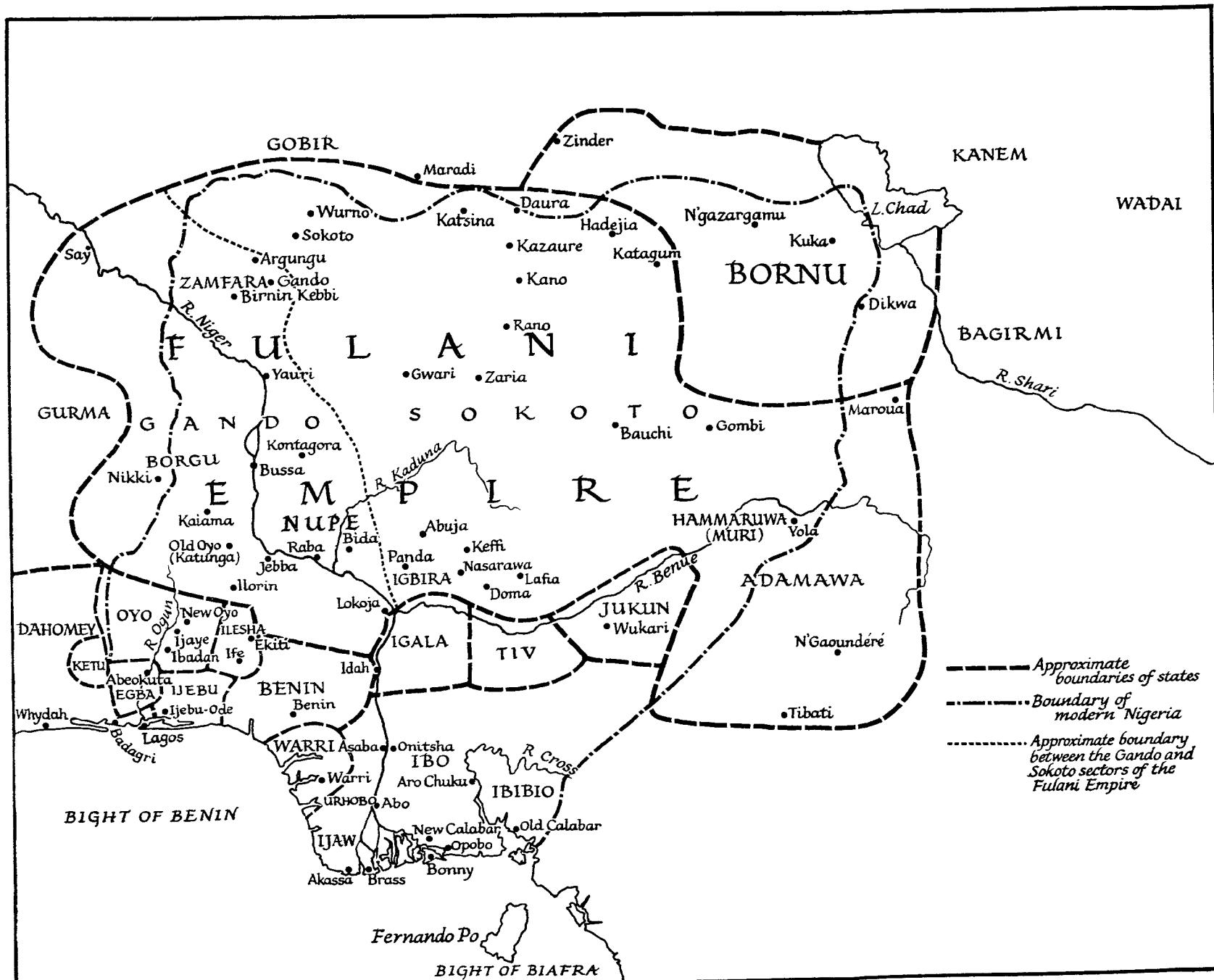
tempo of technical and economic change, and involving Nigeria far more closely with a world market.

This, however, is another theme. In some ways it may seem a pity to end the story in 1900, when British power—which during the nineteenth century had continued in the main to influence the system from outside—was formally established over the entire Nigerian region. True, the history of the past sixty years is all of a piece with the history of the preceding centuries: and I have included in an Epilogue a few short twentieth-century passages, which are meant to illustrate the two aspects—of continuity and change. The civilizations which had been evolved in Bornu, in the Hausa States, among the peoples of the Niger–Benue confluence, in Oyo, Benin, and the Delta States, and among the Ibo, have projected themselves into the present. But they have undergone important transformations: as a consequence, first, of the imposition of a pattern of European institutions; and, second, of the growth of modern political movements seeking, and now achieving, a restoration of African sovereignty. If we desired to tell this story also, as Muhammad Bello might say, we should require many books. ‘But the sensible reader will understand that beyond the stream there is a big sea.’



2. THE STATES OF THE NIGERIAN REGION IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

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3. THE STATES OF THE NIGERIAN REGION IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

SECTION ONE

Legends of Origin

THE GIRGAM · *The Legend of Daura*¹

The people went up out of Canaan and settled in the land of Palestine. And a certain man among them named Najib the Canaanite went up out of Palestine with all his household and journeyed westwards into Libya, which is one of the Provinces of Egypt, and there they dwelt for many years. And a certain man among them named Abdul Dar, and he was a son of Najib, went up out of Libya and dwelt in the Province of Tripoli. And after a time he sought the kingship of Tripoli, but the people refused. Wherefore he arose with his people and journeyed to the south till he came to an oasis called Kusugu and dwelt there. And he begat children, and they were all daughters. Their names were Bukainya and Gambo and Kafai and Waizamu and Daura, and she was the youngest. All these he begat before they came to Daura.

And a certain man named Abuyazidu,² son of Abdulahi, king of Bagdad, quarrelled with his father and the people of the

¹ This version of the Daura legend is taken from H. R. Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs*, Lagos, 1928, iii, pp. 132–4. The *Girgam*, or written record, of which this is a translation, is said by Palmer to have been stolen from Nuhu, Sarkin Zango, in about the middle of the nineteenth century, ‘though it is not known at what period or by what King of Daura this writing was first undertaken’. The legend is built around Daura’s generally accepted claim to be the earliest of the Hausa States, the mother kingdom. For a slightly different version of the legend, translated from the MS. *Daura Makas Sariki* (= ‘Daura snake-slayer’) by E. J. Arnett, see *Journal of the African Society*, ix, 1909–10, pp. 161–7.

² Palmer regards this Abuyazidu, the legendary ancestor of the Hausa ruling dynasties, as having some historic connexion with the Abu Yazid who led the revolt of the nomad Kharijite Berbers against the Fatimids in North Africa in the first half of the tenth century A.D. This Maghribi Abu Yazid was probably born in the western Sudan; was known as ‘the man on the donkey’; and was eventually captured and killed by the Fatimids in A.D. 947 (Palmer, *The Bornu, Sahara, and Sudan*, pp. 273–4, n. 1). See also Ch.-A. Julien, *Histoire de l’Afrique du Nord*, Paris, 1956, II, pp. 62–64.

city. And they were divided into forty companies. Then Abuyazidu with twenty companies journeyed until they came to Bornu, and they dwelt there. But the King of Bornu saw that Abuyazidu was stronger than he and was of a mightier house, so he took counsel with his people. And they counselled him that he should give Abuyazidu his daughter to wife, and become his father-in-law. And he did so and gave him his daughter Magira to wife, and he married her. Then the Sarkin Bornu said to Abuyazidu that he wished to go to war and prayed him to lend him his horsemen and warriors to aid him against his foe, and he gave him three thousand horses with their warriors, together with princes to the number of seventeen. And he said 'When we return from this war I will make them princes in my country'. And they went out to war and stayed for six months.

Then Sarkin Bornu took counsel to kill Abuyazidu, but his wife Magira heard it and straightway told him. And when he saw all that had been done, that his horsemen had been taken from him and his princes, he saw that it was a plot to overcome him, and he spake unto his people and bade them flee to the north during the night. And they obeyed and left him, and he arose with his wife and journeyed to the west. And when they came to a place called Gabas ta Buram, his wife bare a son: and he left her there and passed on with his concubine and his mule, and his concubine also was with child. And they journeyed until they came to Daura at night and they alighted at the house of an old woman whose name was Waira and he asked her for water. But she answered that they could not get water except on Fridays. And he asked her what hindered them, and she told him there was a snake in the well. And he took the bucket which she gave him and went to the well and let the bucket down into the water. When the snake heard the bucket she lifted her head out of the well to kill him, but he drew his sword and cut off her head—and her head was like the head of a horse. And he drew water and took the head of the snake, and it was the night before Friday.

And in the morning the people assembled at the well and they questioned one another who had done this thing to the snake, whose name was Sarki, and they marvelled at that part which lay outside the well and that which remained within it.

And the news was brought to the Queen of Daura, and she mounted with all her princesses and came to the well, and she asked who had done this thing. And many people spake falsely and said that they had killed the snake, but when she asked to be shown the head of the snake they were all dumb. Then spake the old woman at whose house Abuyazidu had alighted, and said that a man had come to her house during the night with an animal which was like a horse and yet was not a horse; 'and he asked me for a bucket and I gave it to him, and he drew water and watered his beast and gave me what remained; perchance it was he who has done this deed'. And they summoned him and asked him, and he said he had done it, and showed them the head of the snake. And the Queen said 'I have promised that whosoever should do this thing, I will give him half my town'. But Abuyazidu said he wished rather to marry her, and she consented. And he dwelt in her house together with his concubine who was with child. And when the people came to the Queen to bring her news, she would bid them to go to the house of Makassarki (the snake-killer). Then the concubine bare a son and she named him 'Mukarbigari'. Then the Queen of Daura also bare a son and she named him 'Bawogari'. Then Abuyazidu died and Bawo ruled in his stead. And Bawo begat six sons¹ and these are their names:—

Gazaura who became king of Daura,
 Bagauda who became king of Kano,
 and these were the sons of the same mother.
 Gunguma who became king of Zazzau
 Duma who became king of Gobir,
 and these two were sons of the same mother.
 Kumayau who became king of Katsina
 Zamna Kogi who became king of Rano,
 and these two were sons of the same mother.

¹ These sons were the eponymous founders of the six original Hausa States: Daura, Kano, Zaria (Zazzau), Gobir, Katsina, and Rano. In literature these are usually referred to as the *Hausa Bokoi*, i.e. the seven (true) Hausa States, as contrasted with the *Banza Bokoi*, the seven bastard Hausa States, i.e. the states which came within the field of Hausa influence. The *Hausa Bokoi* are made up to seven by the inclusion usually of Biram, or sometimes Zamfara. Various accounts exist of the 'bastard seven' (seven for the sake of symmetry), but Barth's list is usually followed: Zamfara, Kebbi, Nupe, Gwari, Yauri, Yoruba, and Kororafa.

IBN FARTUA · *Bornu: The Origin of the Saifawa Dynasty*¹

The Sultan Ibrahim son of Saif [Ibrāhīm ibn Sayf],² mentioned above, so we have heard from the lips of our elders, buried his father in the land of Yaman, in Ṣanā'ā, and then migrated from Yaman by slow stages till he came to the land of Sima in Kanem. He settled there, he and his sons and grandsons. Years passed, till the time of Dāūd ibn Nikaleh.

Before the time of Sultan Dāūd, there was no discord, or quarrel in any of the four quarters of the realm, and everyone was under the authority and protection of the Mais of Kanem.³

We have heard from learned Sheikhs that the utmost extent of their power in the east was to the land of Daw⁴ and to the Nile of the cultivated lands; in the west their boundary reached the river called Baramusa.⁵ Thus we have heard from our elders who have gone before. What greatness can equal their greatness, or what power equal their power, or what kingdom equal their kingdom?

None, indeed, none. . . .

The author of the book 'Ifrikiya', relates that the people of Ḥimyar⁶ son of Ghālib are the successors of the Bani Hāshim, in truth without doubt or uncertainty. . . .

¹ From Ahmad ibn Fartua, *The Kanem Wars of Mai Idris Alooma*, translated from the Arabic by H. R. Palmer, and included in his *Sudanese Memoirs*, i, pp. 15–16. Idris Alooma ruled as Mai of Bornu at the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries—from 1580 to 1617, according to Urvoy. (See below, Sect. IV, pp. 110–16, for some account of his reign). Ibn Fartua was his principal Imam and chronicler. In this passage Ibn Fartua gives what was presumably the official account of the origin of the Saifawa dynasty to which Idris Alooma belonged.

² i.e. Sayf ibn Dhi Yazan, the legendary ancestor of the Saifawa dynasty, a famous pre-Islamic hero, belonging to the old Ḥimyar royal line, who led the struggle to free the Yemen from the domination of Aksum (Ethiopia), an Arab Arthur. Having failed to obtain the help of Byzantium against Aksum (a fellow Christian power), he turned to the Persian sovereign, Kisra Anūsharwān, who sent a force to Yemen, with whose assistance Sayf succeeded in expelling the Aksumite garrison. 'But soon al-Yaman was converted into a Persian satrapy, and the South Arabians found they had only changed one master for another' (P. K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, London, 1953, pp. 65–66).

³ The text reads 'under their protection'.

⁴ The text reads 'Diway', unknown.

⁵ Text, 'Barmusah'. Palmer identifies with the Niger.

⁶ The Ḥimyarites were a dynasty who ruled southern Arabia from about 115 B.C. to about A.D. 525, with an interval of Aksumite rule in the fourth century (Hitti, op. cit., pp. 55–62).

We saw in the book ‘Ifrikiya’ that Ḥimyar conquered the world and had a magnificent kingdom. He built between Kufra¹ and ‘Irāq one thousand houses of crystal, and placed in every house a bed with eight legs of silver, each leg gilded with gold, and on each bed was a captive maiden from among the daughters of the kings whom he conquered. Ḥimyar was the brother of Luway ibn Ghālib and Luway was the ancestor of the Kuraish.²

We have seen also written in the above mentioned book that when the Bani Hāshim and the Ḥimyar obtained booty in war they divided it since the Ḥimyar were the heirs of the Bani Hāshim. So we read in ‘Ifrikiya’.

We have seen also in the book ‘Fatuhu Sham’ that one of the kings of Yaman named Saif ibn Dhi Yazan foretold our Prophet’s coming, since God inspired him with mature wisdom so to do.

Let him who reflects take heed to the words we have quoted from the book ‘Ifrikiya’ and the book ‘Fatuhu Sham’, that he may know the ancestry of our Sultan al-Hajj Idris ibn ‘Ali (may God ennoble him) for he is of the exalted race. Truly his descent is traced back to the Kuraish and such is not the case with many people.²

B E L L O · *The Origins of the Yoruba*³

The country of Yoruba is extensive and has streams and forests and rocks and hills. There are many curious and beautiful things in it. The ships of Christians come there. The people of Yoruba are descended from the Bani Kan‘ān and the kindred of Nimrud. Now the reason of their having settled in the west according to what we are told is that Ya‘rub ibn Qahtan drove them out of ‘Irāq to westwards and they travelled between

¹ Kufra, an oasis in south-eastern Libya.

² Kuraish (*Quraysh*), the Meccan family to which the Prophet Muhammad belonged. The point of this reference is to show that the ruling dynasty of Bornu—like other ruling dynasties of the Muslim world—had a respectable descent, from the Prophet, and from pre-Islamic Arab dynasties.

³ From Muhammad Bello, *Infaq al-maysūr*, paraphrased and translated as *The Rise of the Sokoto Fulani* by E. J. Arnett, Kano, 1929, p. 16. For some account of Muhammad Bello, 1779–1837, son of Shaikh ‘Uthmān dan Fodio, the effective founder of the Fulani Empire, see Introduction, p. 42; for other extracts from his writings, and accounts of him, see below, Sect. VII, pp. 196–205, 213–15, 220–1.

Miṣr¹ and Ḥabash² until they reached Yoruba. It happened that they left a portion of their people in every country they passed. It is said that the Sudanese who live up on the hills are all kindred; so also the people of Yauri are their kindred.

The people of Yauri resemble those of Nufe [Nupe] in appearance. In the land of Yoruba are found the birds green in colour which are called 'babghā' in Arabic and which we call 'Aku'.³ It is a bird which talks and is beautiful.

JOHNSON · *The Legend of Oduduwa*⁴

The origin of the Yoruba nation is involved in obscurity. Like the early history of most nations the commonly received accounts are for the most part purely legendary. The people being unlettered, and the language unwritten, all that is known is from traditions carefully handed down.

The National Historians are certain families retained by the King at Oyo whose office is hereditary; they also act as the King's bards, drummers, and cymbalists. It is on them we depend as far as possible for any reliable information we now possess; but, as may be expected, their accounts often vary in several important particulars. We can do no more than relate the traditions which have been universally accepted.

The Yorubas are said to have sprung from Lamurudu, one of the kings of Mecca, whose offspring were:—Oduduwa, the ancestor of the Yorubas, the Kings of Gogobiri and of the Kukawa, two tribes in the Hausa country. It is worthy of remark that these two nations, notwithstanding the lapse of time since their separation and in spite of the distance from each other of their respective localities, still have the same distinctive tribal marks on their faces; and Yoruba travellers are free amongst them and vice versa, each recognising each other as of one blood.

¹ Egypt.

² Ethiopia.

³ Parrots.

⁴ From the opening chapter of Samuel Johnson's *History of the Yorubas*, London, 1921, pp. 3–5. Samuel Johnson, who died in 1901, worked as C.M.S. pastor at Oyo. This work, which remains the most substantial study of Yoruba history yet undertaken, based, as the author explains here, principally upon the oral traditions of the Kingdom of Oyo, was completed in 1897, though not published until twenty-four years later.

At what period of time Lamurudu reigned is unknown, but, from the accounts given of the revolution among his descendants and their dispersion, it appears to have been a considerable time after Mahomet.

We give the accounts as they are related:—

The Crown Prince Oduduwa relapsed into idolatry during his father's reign, and, as he was possessed of great influence, he drew many after him. His purpose was to transform the state religion into paganism, and hence he converted the great mosque of the city into an idol temple, and this Asara, his priest, who was himself an image maker, studded with idols.

Asara had a son called Braima who was brought up a Mohammedan. During his minority he was a seller of his father's idols, an occupation which he thoroughly abhorred, but which he was obliged to engage in. But in offering for sale his father's handiwork, he usually invited buyers by calling out: 'Who would purchase falsehood?' A premonition this of what the boy will afterwards become.

By the influence of the Crown Prince a royal mandate was issued ordering all the men to go out hunting for three days before the annual celebration of the festivals held in honour of these gods.

When Braima was old enough he seized the opportunity of one of such absences from the town of those who might have opposed him to destroy the gods whose presence had caused the sacred mosque to become desecrated. The axe with which the idols were hewed in pieces was left hanging on the neck of the chief idol, a huge thing in human shape. Enquiry being made, it was soon discovered who the iconoclast was, and when accosted, he gave replies which were not unlike those which Joash gave to the Abiezrites who had accused his son Gideon of having performed a similar act (see Judges vi, 28–33). Said Braima, 'Ask that huge idol who did it.' The men replied, 'Can he speak?' 'Then', said Braima, 'Why do you worship things which cannot speak?' He was immediately ordered to be burnt alive for this act of gross impiety. A thousand loads of wood were collected for a stake, and several pots of oil were brought for the purpose of firing the pile. This was signal for a civil war. Each of the two parties had powerful followers, but the Mohammedan party, which was hitherto suppressed, had the upper

hand, and vanquished their opponents. Lamurudu the King was slain, and all his children with those who sympathized with them were expelled from the town. The Princes who became Kings of Gogobiri and of the Kukawa went westwards and Oduduwa eastwards. The latter travelled 90 days from Mecca, and after wandering about finally settled down at Ile Ife where he met with Agbo-niregun (or Setilu) the founder of the Ifa worship.

Oduduwa and his children had escaped with two idols to Ile Ife. Sahibu being sent with an army to destroy or reduce them to submission was defeated, and amongst the booty secured by the victors was a copy of the Koran. This was afterwards preserved in a temple, and was not only venerated by succeeding generations as a sacred relic, but is even worshipped to this day under the name of *Idi*, signifying Something tied up.

Such is the commonly received account among this intelligent although unlettered people. But traces of error are very apparent on the face of this tradition. The Yorubas are certainly not of the Arabian family, and could not have come from Mecca—that is to say the Mecca universally known in history—and no such accounts as the above are to be found in the records of Arabian writers of any kings of Mecca; an event of such importance could hardly have passed unnoticed by their historians. But then it may be taken for granted that all such accounts and traditions have in them some basis in actual facts; nor is the subject under review exempted from the general rule, and this will become apparent on a closer study of the accounts.

That the Yorubas came originally from the East there cannot be the slightest doubt, as their habits, manners and customs, etc., all go to prove. With them the East is Mecca and Mecca is the East. Having strong affinities with the East, and Mecca in the East looming so largely in their imagination, everything that comes from the East, with them, comes from Mecca; and hence it is natural to represent themselves as having hailed originally from that city.

E G H A R E V B A · *Benin: The Founding of the Second Kingdom*¹

Actually, the people had previously intended to set up a republican form of government because of the confusions and unsatisfactory rule of the last reign.² On the contrary, Evin-an who was made President, selfishly changed the policy by nominating his eldest son Ogiamwen as his successor. The people therefore indignantly despatched ambassadors to Ife (Uhe) requesting that a wise prince be sent to be their ruler. For things were going from bad to worse and the people saw that there was need for a capable ruler.

In order to test the ability of the Binis, Oduduwa, the then ruler of Ife, first of all sent seven lice to the chiefs of Benin to be cared for and then bring them back to him after three years, before complying with their request for a prince. This condition was fulfilled and Oduduwa was greatly surprised to see the lice in increased sizes when they were returned to him by the Chiefs of Benin. He exclaimed that 'the people who could take care of such minute pests as lice could undoubtedly take care of my son'....

Prince Oranmiyan, one of the sons of Oduduwa of Ife, the father and progenitor of the Yoruba Obas, was sent, accompanied by courtiers, including Ogiefa, a native doctor; and he succeeded in reaching the city after much trouble at Obia River with the ferry man.

The last leader, Ogiamwen, was much opposed to his coming. He gave it as his reason that it was too difficult to serve an Oba (King)—'Ogie mianmwen na ga'; hence his name Ogiamwen.³ But as the need for a proper Oba was felt to be so great by the inhabitants, no heed was paid to his advice.

¹ From Jacob U. Egharevba, *A Short History of Benin*, Benin, 2nd ed., 1953, pp. 5-9. Chief Egharevba, a member of the Royal Society of the House of Iwebo and Curator of the Benin Museum, explains that, in compiling his history, he drew upon material supplied by *Ihogbe*, the worshippers and recorders of the departed Obas; *Ogbelaka*, the Royal Bards; *Igun-eronmwwo*, the Royal Brass Smith; *Ohen-sa* of Akpakpava, one of the descendants of the Benin native fathers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; as well as by successive Obas of Benin.

² i.e. the reign of Owodo, the last *Ogiso* (King) of the former dynasty, banished for maladministration.

³ One of several examples of folk-etymology in this passage.

Prince Oranmiyan took up his abode in the palace built for him at Usama by the elders (now a coronation shrine). Soon after his arrival he married a beautiful lady, Erinnwinde, daughter of Enogie of Ego, by whom he had a son. After some years residence here he called a meeting of the people and renounced his office, remarking that the country was a land of vexation, 'Ile Ibinu' (by which name the country was known afterwards), and that only a child born, trained and educated in the arts and mysteries of the land could reign over the people. He caused his son born to him by Erinnwinde to be made Oba in his place, and returned to his native land, Ife, leaving Ogiefa, Ihama, Oloton and others at Benin City in charge of his son. . . .

Oranmiyan halted at Ugha, now Okha in Benin Division, where the Binis went to him for decision in their matters for a period of three years. . . . Oranmiyan also halted at Obbah and remained there for over two years before leaving for Ife finally. He did this in order to allow some time for the growth of his son, Eweka I, before going to Ife so that he might not be returned to Benin by the then Oni (Oghene) of Ife. He also, after staying about three years in Ife, left for Oyo where he also left a son behind on his leaving the place; and this son ultimately became the first Alafin of the present line, while Oranmiyan himself was reigning as the Oni of Ife. Therefore, Prince Oranmiyan of Ife, the father of Eweka I, the Oba of Benin, was also the father of the first Alafin of Oyo. . . .

At that time this land [Benin] was known as 'Ile'. The first horse was brought to Benin by Oranmiyan.

The son of Prince Oranmiyan by Erinnwinde was born at Ego and brought up at Use, where he won the celebrated game of 'Akhue'.¹ In the excitement of winning the game played with the seven charmed seeds or marbles sent to him from Ife by his father through Ehendiwo, he made his first utterance 'Owo-nika' (I succeeded) which has been corrupted into Eweka. It surprised the inhabitants of Use to hear a child born in Benin make his first utterance in the Yoruba tongue, his father's tongue.

¹ Sir Alan Burns has suggested that this is *Awélé*, or *Wari*, the ancient and widespread African board-game. For an account of its distribution, rules, variations, &c., see Charles Béart, *Jeux et jouets de l'Ouest africain*, Mémoires de l'IFAN, No. 42, Dakar, 1955, ii, ch. 19, pp. 475–516.

In obedience to Prince Oranmiyan's command the young prince was ultimately crowned Oba under the title of 'Eweka' at Usama, the old Palace of his father, amid rejoicing and acclamation of the people. Ever since, every Oba has to go to Use before his coronation to choose a title at the spot where Eweka I had won the game of Akhue and uttered the word which became his title before he was crowned as Eweka I.

Special royal regalia and other necessary insignia were sent to Eweka at his coronation from Ife by his father....

At his death Eweka I left a strong order that his remains must be taken to Ife to be buried with his fathers and this order was carried out accordingly. Since then the remains of the Oba of Benin were taken to Ife in every third reign. Eweka I had a long and glorious reign. He had many children who always were quarrelling with themselves. He sent some of them away as Enigie (Dukes) to various villages.

TEPOWA · *The Origins of Brass*¹

The country now known to us as Brass in the Niger Delta was first inhabited by three persons, viz:—Obolo, Olodia and Onyo. The three towns founded by them were called after their names (as Rome after Romulus who founded it), Oboloama, Olodiamma and Onyoama respectively.

Opinions differ greatly as to who these three persons were and whence they came. Some maintain that they came from Benin, others believe that they were from Ijaw. But as there are no authentic records to corroborate the above it can only be affirmed that they were strangers.

These three towns did not last for any length of time as they were completely effaced at two different periods and through different causes.

... The people of Onyoama settled down peaceably for some time, but they were subsequently overthrown by the Kulas in a war undertaken by King Onyo of Onyoama. Report has it, that this war had its origin in a bloodthirsty act committed by King Onyo. During the prevalence of peace and quiet, trade

¹ From Adebiyi Tepowa, 'A Short History of Brass and its People', *Journal of the African Society*, 1907, pp. 33 and 35-37.

intercourse existed between the Kulas and the Onyoamas. One of the princes of Kula visited Onyoama on a trading tour, and saw a princess of that country of whom he became enamoured. He made overtures of marriage to her and was accepted. His visits subsequently became more frequent, and he was the guest of his fiancée on all such occasions. He naturally desired to see his future father-in-law, and day after day asked the princess to accompany and introduce him to her father, and was as often put off by her till a more favourable opportunity.

He called on one occasion without previous intimation, and found that the princess was away fishing. The anxiety to make the acquaintance of his future father-in-law got the better of him; and he went along, taking with him, as becoming his rank, twelve demijohns of palm-wine which he brought from his country for presentation to royalty. Arriving at the palace, he was taken to the king: and on announcing his intention of marrying the princess (naming her) the king forthwith slew him with his sword (with the last word dying on his lips). The news spread like wildfire, and when the princess returned and entered her quarters she saw a lot of baggage which, she was given to understand, had belonged to her lover. She inquired after him and the servants told her he was out for a walk—for they were afraid to break the painful news to her. Her womanly instinct however led her to suspect that her lover had gone to the king unaccompanied, contrary to custom. When she got to the palace, she found the mutilated corpse of her lover on the ground, and burst into violent fits of weeping, at the same time hurling threats and curses on her father.

She returned to her house, took a few necessary articles for a journey, and headed straight for Kula, in a canoe, weeping as she went, and singing the following song:—

Onyoama, buru bele indo nenge, buru na indi na gbori bele,
o mu bere ko bie, Kula ntaba, idei nona tel gbania o?

(Onyoama, yam is sweeter than fish; yam and fish are
equally sweet; go and inquire the reason of the palaver
why my father killed my husband, as I am going to Kula.)

With this plaintive melody she arrived at her destination; and as she stood singing dirges over her beloved, who lay miles away, she attracted a great crowd around her, drawn thither

partly from curiosity and partly from wonder and pity. Unheeding the anxious inquiries of the sympathising crowd, she asked to be shown the way to the king's house, which was accordingly done. She began in tragic fashion by throwing herself on the mercy of the king as being the cause of the disaster; and then poured forth her tale of woe with painfully graphic clearness, explaining in measured terms and with peculiar emphasis her reasons for refusing the introduction desired by her late lover, the principal of which were his comeliness, which in her opinion was extraordinary, and her father's excessive fondness for human flesh—winding up with expressions of manifestly sincere regret at the occurrence. (Crude as was the notion of love entertained by a semi-savage tribe, it must not be supposed that the action of this princess was a mock display of posthumous affection—the passion was as genuine as it was undeveloped.) As a set-off she suggested that the king of Kula should prepare for immediate war against her father. The news overwhelmed the king; and this is hardly to be wondered at, when it is considered that the late prince was the handsomest of all his sons.

Actuated by the tearful pleadings of the princess and revenge for the loss of his much-loved son, the king of Kula mustered his army and started on the march for Onyoama. At the request of the princess a halt was made when Onyoama was reached, to allow of her clearing her belongings from her house and rejoining the army. At a given signal from her the army fired on the town—the war began in terrible earnest—and so effective was the charge of the Kulas that not a single inhabitant of Onyoama survived to tell the sad story.

After sacking the town, the Kulas resumed their homeward march, singing the paean of victory set to music by the musicians of their tribe in the following song:—

‘Onyoama ye kingerebo dibigha mi ama.’

A proverbial saying to the same effect exists in Brass to this day:—Onyoama pere fua tariagha? (Are you the king of Onyoama who ate his son-in-law?)

SECTION TWO

From the Ninth to the Fourteenth Century

A L - Y A ' Q Ū B I · *Ninth-Century Kanem*¹

Now as for the Blacks who went westwards towards the Maghreb, they have divided the country, so that they now have a number of Kingdoms. The first of their Kingdoms is that of the Zagħāwa,² and they inhabit the territory which is called Kanem. Their dwellings are reed huts, and they do not possess any cities. Their King is called Kākara. . . .

A L - B A K R I · *Umayyads in Kanem*³

One day's journey leads to Zuwila,⁴ a town without walls situated in the middle of the desert. . . . It is there that the land of the Negroes begins. . . . It is from Zuwila that slaves are exported to Ifriqiya⁵ and to neighbouring countries. Purchases are made there through the medium of short pieces of red stuff. Beyond

¹ From Ahmad ibn Wādiḥ al-Ya'qūbi, *al-Ta'rikh*, ed. Houtsma, Leiden, 1883, p. 219. Ya'qūbi was a late ninth-century Shi'ite author who wrote a compendium of universal history in about A.D. 890. There is a translation of the section of his *Ta'rikh* dealing with 'The Kingdoms of the Berber and Ifarik' in H. R. Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs*, ii, pp. 18–20.

² A tribe of Berber nomads (*mulethhemin*, men of the veil), inhabiting the region between Chad and the Fezzan, who appear at this period to have dominated much of the Sudan. They now survive only in northern Darfur. See Bovill, *The Golden Trade of the Moors*, pp. 220–1.

³ Abu 'Ubaid 'Abdallāh al-Bakrī al-Kortubī, *Description de l'Afrique septentrionale*, De Slane's translation, Paris, 1859, pp. 28–30, quoted in Y. Urvoy, *Histoire de l'empire de Bornou*, Mémoires de l'IFAN, No. 7, Paris, 1949, p. 28. Al-Bakrī, an Arab geographer of the late eleventh century (1040–94), lived at Cordova, and published his *Description* (*al-masālik w'al-mamālik*) in 1067. See C. Brockelmann, *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur* (Leiden, 1938), s. i, pp. 875–6.

⁴ Zuwila, a little to the east of modern Murzuq, was at this time the commercial centre of the Fezzan. It is still a relatively prosperous oasis, with the remains of an early mosque, towers, and a massive town wall.

⁵ i.e. Tunisia.

the desert of Zuwila, and forty days from that town, is situated the land of Kanem, a race of idolatrous Negroes, whom it is very difficult to visit. . . .

It is asserted that there exists in this country a community descended from some Umayyads who escaped there at a time when their family was the object of Abbasid persecutions. They still preserve their Arab mode of dress and customs. . . .

MAHRAM OF UMME JILMI · Kanem: The Coming of Islam¹

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. May God bless our Lord Muḥammad, his relations and friends. Peace from King Umme to my children who will succeed me, be they Amirs or Officers or Chiefs, or Mu'allims,² or others. Peace be upon you. Hear and understand, and receive good tidings.

The first country in the Sudan which Islam entered was the land of Bornu. It came through Muḥammad ibn Māni, who lived in Bornu for five years in the time of King Bulu, six years in the time of King Arki, four years in the time of King Kadai Hawami, fourteen years in the time of King Umme.

Then he summoned Bornu to Islam by the grace of King Umme. . . .

Mai Umme read secretly from the *Sūrat al-baqara* to *W' al-nās*.³ Then he read the *Risala*⁴ twice, and gave Māni one hundred camels, one hundred pieces of gold, one hundred pieces of

¹ This is an extract from *The Mahram of Umme Jilmi*, translated by H. R. Palmer, and published in his *The Bornu, Sahara and Sudan*, London, 1936, pp. 14–15; also in *Sudanese Memoirs*, iii, pp. 3–5. Palmer describes *Mahrans* as ‘letters patent, or grants of privilege, given by various Mais [Sultans] from the earliest times of the Kanem Kingdom to certain learned or noble families, which owe their preservation to their contingent material value to the grantees and their descendants’. This is not in fact the text of the original *Mahram*, but of a later document referring to it. Umme Jilmi, the first Mai recorded as having been converted to Islam, reigned from approximately A.D. 1085 to 1097 (Urvoy’s dating).

² Men of learning (Hausa, *Mallams*).

³ i.e. from the first *sura* of the Qur’ān (after the *Fatiha*), ‘the Cow’, to the last, ‘Men’.

⁴ *Risāla*, an epistle, presumably here a commentary on the Qur’ān.

silver, and one hundred slaves, all because of the reading and instruction he derived from him.

. . . Mai Umme and Muḥammad ibn Māni spread abroad Islam to last till the day of judgment.

The goods of Muḥammad ibn Māni the First are *harām*¹ till the day of judgment, to the Beni Umme or any besides. He who disobeys the command of the King, and transgresses, and sins, may God not give him heaven, but may he fill his belly with the fire of hell. He who follows my command, may God order his well-being both in this life and the next.

Says the Sultan Umme, the noble—‘Their goods and blood from the time of Muḥammad ibn Māni are in the keeping of the Beni Umme, and all others; I consider them as the flesh of swine, or the flesh of the dog, or the flesh of a monkey or ass. . . .

‘He among them who does a wrong let the matter be left to their chief; there is no other way than this. This is the command of the Sultan; change it not nor alter it, and oppress not the children of Muḥammad ibn Māni, for ever.

‘I make their land *hubus*,² let them be ennobled in their faith.

‘Change not this injunction, for he who after hearing it changes it, his lot is that of those who innovate; for God will note his action. Spread abroad Islam in Bornu and strive to keep the posterity of Muḥammad ibn Māni *harām*.’ King Umme says to his children—‘I make the children of Muḥammad ibn Māni *hubus* to you, and I exempt them from the obligation to entertain your men in the dry season or to pay *diya*³ and all forms of tribute, to the time of my children’s children, and to the day of judgment.

‘He who puts forth his hand against them, may God not bless him, for he transgresseth my behest.’

King Umme spread abroad Islam; on that day he was a victor.

¹ *Harām* means forbidden for religious reasons, tabooed. The prohibition is in this case applied to touching or taking the goods in question.

² *Hubus* (pl. of *habis*) is the Maliki term for *waqf*, that which is permanently endowed for a purpose pleasing to God.

³ *Diya*, bloodwit, compensation paid by one who has killed or wounded another. In Kanem, following Maliki law, the *diya* for homicide was 100 camels or oxen (Trimingham, *Islam in West Africa*, p. 152).

KANURI SONGS · Praise-Song to Umme Jilmi¹

O! Sultan, the good, whose sleep is light as that of a hare:
Sultan, truly a Sultan, who stays not in the house of his father's
sister:²

Of noble birth from both his father and mother:
Of noble birth indeed, of noble birth from both his parents:
Where you sit costly carpets are spread for you; above your
head is a canopy of gold:

O! Sultan, who can discomfit one like pebbles on one's eyelashes:
O! Sultan, Angel of God.

As there is a protector of the camel's tongue, do you protect us:
The friend of youth:

Whose writing slate is made of 'kabwi' wood;
At night a warrior on a coal-black horse; but when day dawns
he is to be seen with his Koran in his hand.

We wait upon your blessing:

Babuma Amadu said to Mai Aji Fannami at the Sugu war,
'Sultan, even if you are mounted on your bay horse called "Kite
Kiteram",

Birni Njimi³ is a long way off if you want to run away.'

*DIWAN OF THE SULTANS OF BORNU · Two
Twelfth-Century Mais⁴*

The Sultan Dunama ibn Umme.⁵ His mother was Kinta, a daughter
of the clan Buram of the tribe of Tubu. His horses numbered

¹ This is an extract from 'the Song of the Babuma to the Sultan Umme Jilmi', translated from the Kanuri by J. R. Patterson and published in his *Kanuri Songs*, Lagos, 1926, pp. 1-3. The Babuma was, with the Ngijima and the Zakkama, one of the three official praise-singers of the Mais of Kanem-Bornu. This song to Mai Umme Jilmi (1085-97) is the oldest of the surviving songs, but, as Patterson explains, 'it has no doubt been added to from time to time, and is not now in its original form'.
² i.e. is not effeminate.

³ Njimi, to the east of Lake Chad, near modern Mao, the capital and commercial centre of Kanem down to the end of the fourteenth century.

⁴ From the *Diwan of the Sultans of Bornu*, a translation of which is published in H. R. Palmer, *History of the First Twelve Years of the Reign of Mai Idris Alooma of Bornu*, Lagos, 1926, pp. 85-86. This *Diwan* is the official history of the Saifawa dynasty from its foundation, in about A.D. 800, to its final extinction in 1846.

⁵ Dunama, who reigned from approximately 1097 to 1150, was the son and successor of Umme Jilmi, referred to above.

100,000—his soldiers were 120,000, not counting mercenaries.¹ None of the Beni Umme enjoyed greater prestige than he.

Among his noble acts were pilgrimages to the sacred house of God on two occasions. On his first pilgrimage he left in Miṣr [Egypt] 300 slaves, and on his second a like number.

When he was on his way to a third pilgrimage, and took ship, the people of Miṣr said to themselves 'If this king returns from Mecca to his country, he will take from us our land and country without doubt.' So they took counsel to destroy him. They opened a sea-cock in his ship, so that the sea drowned him by the command of God. His followers saw him in his white garments floating on the sea, till he vanished from their eyes, lost by the command of God, most high, in the sea of the prophet Musa.² May God pardon him. He reigned fifty-five years.

*The Sultan Biri ibn Dunama.*³ His mother was Fasam [Fāṭima] daughter of the nobles of the tribe of Kayi. He was weak in his conduct of the Government. When a certain thief was executed, his mother heard of the execution from him, and said to her son the Sultan—'How is it that you have killed the thief in view of the command of God, most high, "cut off the hands of thieves, male and female"?'⁴

For this his mother put him in prison. He submitted and remained in prison for a whole year. When the Sultan wished to be present at an assembly of the Amirs, and sit in the Fanadir,⁴ they insisted that the people should leave the place of audience. When the people had left, the Sultan would come in and take his place. When he wished to rise a similar procedure was adopted. Hence this custom as between the Sultan and Amirs which exists to this day, and thus it was in the custom of his time.

Biri died at Gamtilo Jilarge[?]. He reigned twenty-seven years.

¹ The second figure here, referring to the size of the army, is doubtful.

² Musa = Moses: i.e. the Red Sea.

³ Biri I, who reigned from approximately 1150 to 1176, was the son and successor of Dunama.

⁴ The Fanadir was the cage-like construction in which the Mais of Kanem-Bornu sat on state occasions. See the account in Denham and Clapperton, Sect. VII, p. 208 and Plate 7. But the text here too is doubtful.

THE KANO CHRONICLE · The Walls of Kano¹

Gijinmasu, son of Warisi, was the third Sarki. His mother's name was Yanisu. When he came to power he left Seme and went to Gazarzawa. Some, however, say that it was his son Tsariki who came to this place and built a city. The latter is the better version. It was here he ruled. Mazuda said, 'This Sarki has come here in order to destroy our god and our grove of sacrifice.' The people said, 'He has not power to destroy our god, in our time at least.' So Gijinmasu and his people built a house in Gazarzawa. He beguiled the elders with gifts, till by his gifts he obtained dominion over them. They said, 'What a good man this is; how well he treats us.' Mazuda said, 'I want to give my daughter to his son in marriage.' But Bugazau prevented him carrying out his plan. The Sarki consulted the people about building a city. The people agreed: 'Come', they said, 'let us build, for we have the power and the strength.' So they began to build the city. They began the building from Raria. The Sarki slaughtered a hundred cattle on the first day of the work.

They continued the work to the gate of Mazugi, and from there to the water gate and on to the gate of Adama, and the gate of Gudau; then past the gates of Waika, Kansakali and Kawongare,² as far as the gate of Tuji. There were eight gates.

The fifth Sarki was Yusa, called Tsariki. He was the son of Gijinmasu. He it was who completed the walls of Kano, as is well known.

¹ From *The Kano Chronicle* (translated by H. R. Palmer, and published in his *Sudanese Memoirs*, vol. iii), pp. 100–1. *The Kano Chronicle* was apparently composed in about 1890, but based upon earlier, pre-Fulani, records. It gives an account of forty-eight Hausa (after 1807, Fulani) *Sarkis*, or Kings, from Bagoda to Muhammad Bello. According to Palmer's dating, Gijinmasu reigned from A.D. 1095 to 1134, and Yusa Tsariki from 1136 to 1194. (Note in both the Kano and the Bornu chronicles the references to royal mothers.)

² Mazugal, Waika, and Kansakali are names of gates existing at the present day (1960).

E G H A R E V B A · *Benin: The Introduction of Brass-casting from Ife*¹

Oba Oguola wished to introduce brass-casting into Benin similar to various works of art sent him from Uhe [Ife]. He therefore sent to the Oghene of Uhe for a brass-smith and Igue-igha was sent to him. Igue-igha was very clever and left many designs to his successors and was in consequence deified and is worshipped to this day by brass-smiths. The practice of making brass-castings for the preservation of the records of events was originated during the reign of Oguola. He lived to a very old age.

I B N B A T T Ū T A · *Nupe and Bornu*²

Thence the Niledesc ends to Tumbuktu and Gawgaw [Gao] . . . then to the town of Muli in the land of Limis, which is the frontier province of the Kingdom of Mali; thence to Yufi,³ one of the largest towns of the Negroes, whose ruler is one of the most considerable of the Negro rulers. It cannot be visited by any white man because they would kill him before he got there. From Yufi the Nile descends to the land of the Nuba [Nubians], who profess the Christian faith. . . .⁴

The copper is exported from Tagadda⁵ to the town of Kubar

¹ From J. U. Egharevba, *A Short History of Benin*, p. 12. Chief Egharevba gives Oba Oguola's date as about A.D. 1280, but there are no firm dates for the history of Benin prior to the coming of the Portuguese, probably in 1472 (see Introduction, p. 26, and below, Sect. III, pp. 87-88). That Ife was the immediate source of the art of brass-casting in Benin is now generally accepted (see R. E. Bradbury, 'The Benin Kingdom', pp. 20 and 26, in the International African Institute's *Ethnographic Survey of Africa, Western Africa*, part xiii).

² From Ibn Battūta, *Travels in Asia and Africa, 1325-1354*, edited by H. A. R. Gibb, London, 1929, pp. 323 and 336. Muḥammad ibn Abdullāh ibn Battūta (1304-1368/9), the most enterprising and perceptive of the Arab travellers, was born at Tangier, and travelled almost throughout the Muslim world of his day. His extensive journey through the western Sudan took place in 1352/3.

³ Gibb, following W. D. Cooley, in *The Negroland of the Arabs*, identifies 'Yufi' with Nupe. This is questioned by S. F. Nadel, *A Black Byzantium*, p. 404. See Introduction, p. 25.

⁴ Like many others, Ibn Battūta regarded the Niger and the Nile as one continuous river.

⁵ There is controversy regarding the copper of Tagadda, usually identified with

[Gobir],¹ in the regions of the heathens, to Zaghay, and to the country of Barnu,² which is forty days' journey from Tagadda. The people of Barnu are Muslims, and have a king called Idris,³ who never shows himself to his people nor talks to them, except from behind a curtain. From this country come excellent slave-girls, eunuchs, and fabrics dyed with saffron.

IBN KHALDŪN · *Kanem-Bornu and the Hafṣids*⁴

Next to them [the Nubians] are the Zaghawa, a Muslim people one of whose tribes is called Tadjera. Then come the people of Kanem, a very large population among whom Islam predominates. The name of their principal town is Djimi [Njimi] and their rule extends over the countries of the desert as far as the Fezzan. Since the founding of the Hafṣid dynasty, they have enjoyed friendly relations with it. . . .

In the year 655 [A.D. 1257] the Sultan al-Mustansir⁵ received a rich present from one of the Kings of the Negroes, the sovereign of Kanem and lord of Bornu, a town situated on the meridian of Tripoli. Among the gifts which this Negro delegation presented to him was a giraffe, an animal whose external characteristics are most diverse. The inhabitants of Tunis ran

Tegidda n'Tisembt, 97 miles west-north-west of Agades. See Gibb, p. 382, and H. Lhote, 'Contribution à l'étude des Touareg soudanais', *Bulletin de l'IFAN*, Série B, xvii, 3-4, 1955, pp. 359-70.

¹ The location of Gobir at this date is uncertain. See Hogben, *The Muhammadan Emirates of Nigeria*, p. 107.

² Barnu, or Bornu, first mentioned by Ibn Sa'id in about 1280, is here used to refer to the Empire of Kanem. See the following extract from Ibn Khaldūn, and Introduction, pp. 22-23.

³ This Mai Idris ibn Ibrāhīm reigned from approximately A.D. 1329 to 1353 (Urvoy, *Histoire de l'empire du Bornou*, p. 53).

⁴ From Ibn Khaldoun, *Histoire des Berbères*, trans. M. de Slane, Paris, 1925, ii, pp. 109 and 306. 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Khaldūn, the greatest of the medieval Arab historians, was born in Tunis in A.D. 1332; studied at the University of Fez; played for a time an active part in the public life of the Maghreb; retired in 1382 to Cairo, where he was employed as Qādī and died in 1406. For an excellent critical account of his work, see Muhsin Mahdi, *Ibn Khaldūn's Philosophy of History*, London, 1957.

⁵ Abu 'Abdullāh al-Mustansir, the powerful Hafṣid ruler of Tunisia from 1249 to 1277, who assumed the title of Caliph. In addition to the Kanem-Bornu embassy mentioned here, al-Mustansir received embassies from as far afield as Norway. See C.-A. Julien, *Histoire de l'Afrique du Nord*, Paris, 1956, ii, p. 137.

in a crowd to see it, to such an extent that the plain was choked with people; they felt profound astonishment at the appearance of a quadruped whose strange appearance recalled at the same time the distinctive marks of many animals of diverse species.

THE KANO CHRONICLE · Muslim Missionaries in Kano¹

The eleventh Sarki was Yaji, called Ali. His mother was Maganaraku. He was called Yaji because he had a bad temper when he was a boy, and the name stuck to him. . . . In Yaji's time the Wangarawa² came from Mali, bringing the Muhammadan religion, [about forty in all]. The name of their leader was Abdurahaman Zaite. . . . When they came they commanded the Sarki to observe the times of prayer. He complied, and made Gurdamus his Liman,³ and Laual his Muezzin.⁴ Auta cut the throats of whatever flesh was eaten. Mandawali was Liman of all the Wangarawa and of the chief men of Kano. Zaite was their Alkali.⁵ The Sarki commanded every town in Kano country to observe the times of prayer. So they all did so. A mosque was built beneath the sacred tree facing east, and prayers were made at the five appointed times in it. The Sarkin Garazawa was opposed to prayer, and when the Moslems after praying had gone home, he would come with his men and defile the whole mosque and cover it with filth. Dan Bujai was told off to patrol round the mosque with well-armed men from evening until morning. He kept up a constant halloo. For all that the pagans tried to win him and his men over. Some of his men followed the pagans and went away, but he and the rest refused. The defilement continued until Sheshe said to Famore, 'There is no cure for this but prayer'. The people assented. They gathered together on a Tuesday in the mosque at the

¹ Another extract from *The Kano Chronicle*, in Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs*, iii, pp. 104-5 (see above Sect. II, p. 72). This passage refers to the latter part of the fourteenth century; Palmer gives A.D. 1349-85 for the dates of Yaji's reign. This was the period when the Empire of Mali, which had reached its peak under Mansa Musa in the early fourteenth century, was still dominant in the western Sudan, and—as this passage indicates—a focus of Islamization.

² i.e. Mandinka.

³ *al-imām*, leader of prayer.

⁴ *al-mu'adhdhin*, announcer of the hours of prayer.

⁵ *al-qādi*, judge.

evening hour of prayer and prayed against the pagans till sunrise. They only came away when the sun was well up. Allah received graciously the prayers addressed to him. The chief of the pagans was struck blind that day, and afterwards all the pagans who were present at the defilement—they and all their women. After this they were all afraid. Yaji turned the chief of the pagans out of his office and said to him, ‘Be thou Sarki among the blind’.¹

AL - M A Q R I Z I · *Kanem-Bornu at the Height of its Power*²

All the Sudanese derive their origin from Fut the son of Ham. Their tribes number nineteen. . . . The inhabitants of Kanem are a great people, and for the most part Muslims. Their city is called Njimi. . . . [Their king] is a nomad in mode of life. When he sits on his throne his courtiers prostrate themselves before him, and fall on their faces. His army, horse and foot and transport, numbers 100,000. Between Njimi and Yalamlam³ is an immense number of pagans. The King of Kanem has five feudatory kings subject to him. The war-horses of Kanem are small. . . .

Their king in the year 700 A.H. [A.D. 1300] was al-Hajj Ibrāhīm of the sons of Saif ibn Dhi Yazan, who occupied the throne of Kanem, which is the seat of power of Bornu. There reigned after him his son al-Hajj Idrīs. Then Idrīs' brother, Dāūd ibn Ibrāhīm; then 'Umar ibn Idrīs; then the brother of the latter, 'Uthmān ibn Idrīs. A few years before the year 800 A.H. [A.D. 1397] the people of Kanem revolted, and there only remained to the Saifawa the Nubians of their kingdom, who are Muslims and wage Holy War on the people of Kanem. . . .

¹ There is a large organized blind community in Kano: this is the traditional story of its origin.

² These are two extracts from Abu'l 'Abbās Ahmad Taqī al-Dīn al-Maqrīzī (1364–1442) (Brockelmann, *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur*, s. ii, pp. 36–38). The first is translated and reproduced in H. R. Palmer, *The Bornu, Sahara and Sudan*, pp. 191–4; and the second in Ét. Quatremère, *Mémoires géographiques et historiques sur l'Égypte*, Paris, 1811, ii, pp. 27–28. Both passages are also translated in Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs*, ii, pp. 5–8. Maqrizi was ‘a native of Cairo’, who ‘devoted himself to Egyptian history and antiquities, on which subject he composed several standard works’ (R. A. Nicholson, *Literary History of the Arabs*, p. 453). Some of this material is also contained in al-'Umari, *Masālik al-abṣār*, trans. Gaudefroy-Demombynes, Paris, 1927, composed in the mid-fourteenth century.

³ A generic word for Pagan Negro peoples.

... The first seat of this empire on the side which is near to Egypt is called Zuwila.¹ Between this town and the town of Kaukau,² which is on the opposite [western] frontier, the distance is three months' march. The inhabitants of Kanem cover the head with a veil. The king does not show himself except at the time of the two religious festivals, in the morning and afternoon; the rest of the year he is not seen and those who talk to him are placed behind a screen. The principal food of this people is rice which grows wild in the country. They have also cheese, guinea corn, figs, limes, melons, pumpkins and fresh dates. As regards money, they use a kind of cloth which they make and which is called 'Wendy'.³ Each piece is ten cubits long, but for facility of exchange it is cut up into pieces of a quarter of a cubit or smaller. Other substances such as shells of different kinds and pieces of copper or gold are equally used in commerce and their value is estimated in an equivalent amount of cloth. In this country the pumpkins are so big that they are used as boats to cross the Nile. . . .

They are of the sect of the Imām Mālik.⁴ They are particular in enforcing justice and extremely severe as regards religion. In the year 640 A.H. [A.D. 1242], they built in the town of Fustāṭ [Cairo], a college for people belonging to the sect of the Imām Mālik known as the college of Ibn Rashīd. It is in this college that members of this nation reside if they come to Cairo.

AL-QALQASHANDI · *Bornu: Relations with Egypt*⁵

... After greetings, we have sent you as ambassador my cousin, Idrīs ibn Muḥammad, because of the calamity we suffered.

¹ In the Fezzan; see Sect. II, p. 67.

² Probably Gao on the Niger; there is a long discussion of the identification of this 'Kaukau' in Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs*, ii, pp. 9–11.

³ The first mention of the use of currency in Kanem-Bornu. On this whole topic see Urvoix, *Histoire de l'empire du Bornou*, pp. 151–2.

⁴ The Imām Mālik ibn Anās of Medina (d. A.D. 795) was the founder of the Mālikī school of Muslim law (*fīqh*), the oldest of the four orthodox schools, which remains dominant throughout the Maghreb and West Africa. See *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, under *Mālik b. Anas*, pp. 320–4.

⁵ From Ahmad ibn 'Abdullāh al-Qalqashandi, *Subh al-a'shā* (a handbook for government clerks, dealing with style, administrative practice, the history and geography of Egypt and Syria, &c.), Cairo, 1913–19, viii, pp. 116–18. Qalqashandi

The Arabs who are called Judhāma and others have taken captive our free subjects—women and children and old people, and our relatives, and other Muslims. Among these Arabs are polytheists and apostates: they have raided the Muslims and killed a great many of them in a war which broke out between us and our enemies. And on account of this war they have killed our prince, 'Umar ibn Idrīs, a martyr [for the Faith]—he is our brother, the son of our father, al-Hajj Idrīs, son of al-Hajj Ibrāhim; and we are the sons of Saif ibn Dhi Yazan, the father of our tribe, the Arab, of the family of Quraysh, as we have been informed by our learned men.¹

These Arabs have harmed all our land, the land of Bornu, continually up to the present, and have captured our free subjects and relatives, who are Muslims, and are selling them to the slave-dealers in Egypt and Syria and elsewhere, and some they keep for themselves.

Now God has placed in your hands the Government of Egypt, from the Mediterranean to Aswan; and our people have been treated [there] as merchandise. Send messengers to all your lands, to your Amirs, and your Wazirs, and your Qadis, and your Governors, and your men of learning ['Ulamā'], and the heads of your markets; let them examine, and inquire, and discover. When they have found our people, let them remove them from the hands of those who hold them captive, and put them to the test. And if they say—'We are free men—we are Muslims'—believe them, and do not regard them as liars. But when the matter becomes clear to you, release them, and let them return to their liberty and to Islam. In truth, some of the Arabs in our country have turned to evil ways, and are not living at peace. They are ignorant of God's book, and of the *sunna* of our Prophet, and they continue in their wickedness. But do you fear God, and reverence him, and do not abandon our people, to be bought and sold as slaves. . . .

lived in Cairo, composed this major work some time after 1387, and died in 1418 (see *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ii, pp. 699–700). The extract above is taken from a letter, published in Qalqashandī, from 'Uthmān Biri ibn Idrīs, King of Bornu, to Al-Zāhir Sayf-al-din Barqūq, the Mamluk Sultan of Egypt. The letter, Qalqashandi says, was received by Barqūq during the year 794 A.H. (A.D. 1391–2), and was written on quarto sheets, on ruled lines, in the Maghribi script (see Palmer, *The Bornu, Sahara and Sudan*, p. 218).

¹ For the reputed ancestry of the Saifawa dynasty, see Sect. I, pp. 57–58.

SECTION THREE

The Fifteenth Century

THE KANO CHRONICLE · Kano's Relations with Kororafa, Bornu, and Zaria¹

The thirteenth Sarki was Kanajeji. His father's name was Yaji. His mother's name Aunaka. He was a Sarki who engaged in many wars. He hardly lived in Kano at all, but scoured the country round and conquered the towns. He lived for some time near the rock of Gija. He sent to the Kwararafa² and asked why they did not pay him tribute. They gave him two hundred slaves. Then he returned to Kano and kept sending the Kwararafa horses while they continued to send him slaves. Kanajeji was the first Hausa Sarki to introduce 'Lifidi' and iron helmets and coats of mail for battle.³ They were introduced because in the war at Ummabatu the losses had been so heavy....

The fifteenth Sarki was Dauda Bakon Damisa.⁴ His mother was Auta. In his time Dagachi,⁵ a sultan, came from South Bornu with many men and mallams. He brought with him horsedrums and trumpets and flags and guns.⁶ When he came he sat down at Bomfai. The Sarkin Kano went to see him. When he saw that he was indeed a sultan, he returned home and took counsel with his men and said, 'Where is this man to stay?'

¹ From *The Kano Chronicle* in Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs*, iii, pp. 107-9 (see Sect. II, p. 72, above).

² Kwararafa, or Kororafa, the old capital of the Jukun Kingdom: the term is also commonly used, as here, to refer to the people. See C. K. Meek, *A Sudanese Kingdom*, London, 1931, pp. 21-49.

³ *Lifidi*, a quilted protection for war-horses; *safa*, which Palmer translates 'coats of mail', really means quilted armour for soldiers.

⁴ Dauda was the son of Kanajeji; H. R. Palmer gives 1390-1410 for the dates of Kanajeji's reign, and 1421-38 for Dauda.

⁵ Meaning simply 'king' or 'ruler'.

⁶ Anachronistic, if Palmer's dating is correct. It is unlikely that hand-guns reached the central Sudan before the late sixteenth century. See Sect. IV, p. 114.

The Galadima¹ Babba said, 'If you let him settle elsewhere than in Kano town, he will soon be master of that part of the country'. The Sarki said, 'Where can he stay here with his army—Kano is full of men—unless we increase the size of our town?' The Galadima was sent to see Dagachi and returned with him, and built a house for him and his men at Dorai. The Sarki said to his men, 'What shall I give him to please him, and to make his heart glad?' The Galadima Babba said, 'Give him whatever you wish, you are Sarki, you own everything.' The Sarki said nothing. At that time he was about to start for war with Zaria, so he said to Gadachi, 'When I go to war I will put all the affairs of Kano into your hands, city and country alike.' So the Sarkin Kano went to war and left Gadachi in the town. Dagachi ruled the town for five months and became very wealthy. Then the Sarki returned. At this time Zaria, under Queen Amina,² conquered all the towns as far as Kwararafa and Nupe. Every town paid tribute to her. The Sarkin Nupe sent forty eunuchs and ten thousand kolas to her. She first had eunuchs and kolas in Hausaland. Her conquest extended over thirty-four years. In her time the whole of the products of the west were brought to Hausaland. I will leave now the story of Amina and return to Sarkin Kano. Dauda Bakon Damisa ruled seventeen years.

SULTAN KADAI · *A Letter from the Mai of Bornu to the Murābiṭīn of Tuat*³

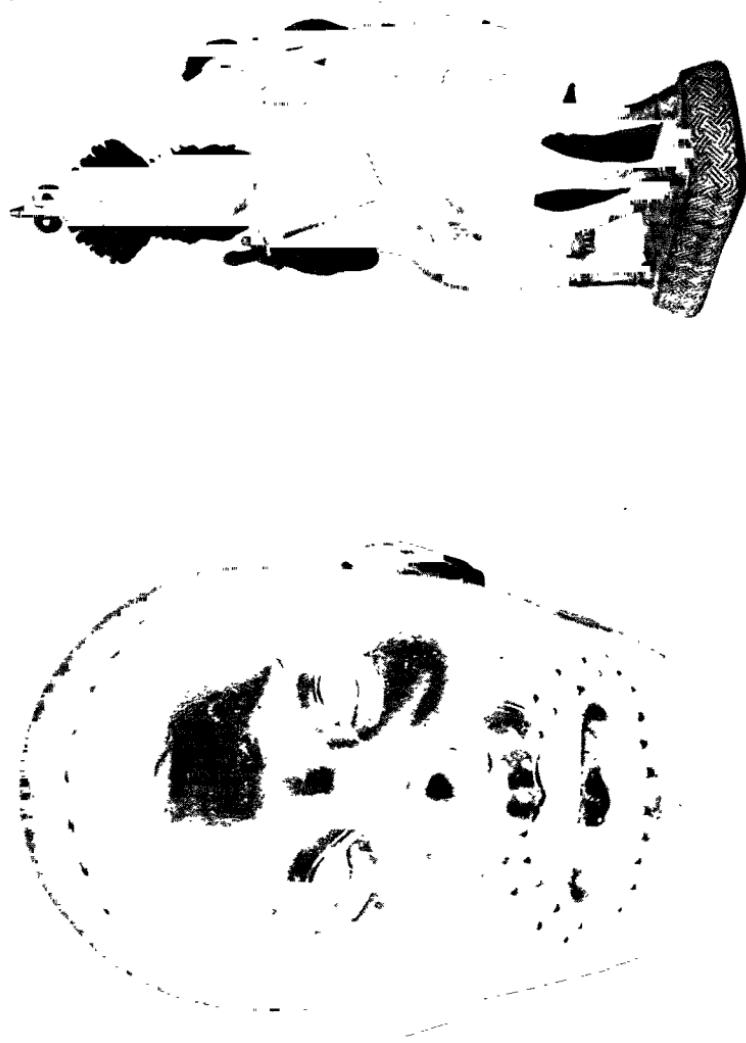
May God aid him. The Sultan Kadai, son of Jamshish.⁴ May God give him victory. Praise be to God, He alone. May God bless our Lord Muhammad and his family.

¹ *Galadima*, a title imported (like many others) into the Hausa States from Bornu. From its original meaning, 'Governor of Galadi (i.e. the western territories of Kanem-Bornu)', the term came to be used of a particular powerful functionary within the Bornu and Hausa systems of government, without any territorial reference.

² On Queen Amina and her innovations see Introduction, p. 24.

³ This letter is translated in A. G. P. Martin, *Les Oasis sahariennes*, Algiers, 1908, pp. 122–3, and quoted in H. R. Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs*, ii, pp. 4–5. The Sultan Kadai mentioned here was presumably the Mai of Bornu who murdered his predecessor, Ibrāhim; reigned from 1440 to 1446; and was himself murdered by his successor Dunama (Urvoy, *Histoire de l'empire de Bornou*, pp. 54–55).

⁴ Meaning 'buffalo', an honorific title.



(a) Ife brass-casting of a mask and head, supposed to represent the third Oni of Ife, Obalufon II. Found at Winmonije in 1938

(b) Benin bronze equestrian figure, possibly representing a visitor from the northern Muslim states, seventeenth or early eighteenth century

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PLATE 2

(a) Seated bronze figure
from Tada, showing
the influence of the
Ife school
Photograph by
William Fagg



(b) Bronze male figure
from Jebba, showing
affinities with the work
of both Ife and Benin

Photograph by
Ian Binkworth



Tsoede is traditionally supposed to have brought to
the influence of the
Ife school
Photograph by
William Fagg

Two of the nine sacred bronzes of Tada and Jebba, which Tsoede is traditionally supposed to have brought to
Ife school
Photograph by
William Fagg

From the exalted and respected Sultan, our master and lord Kadai, the son of our lord and master Jamshish, may God give him victory: to the Murābiṭin who are descended from Shaikh al-Mukhtar and from Sidi 'Amr al-Shaikh and to all their brothers and the Darmaksha who live at Tuat.

Peace be upon you all. After salutations, we are greatly surprised. Why have you abandoned the custom of your fathers? Why have you ceased to send to our country? Since the treaty between you and the Sultan, our lord Saghrir, you have never come back to us. I swear by God I will do you no hurt nor will I allow any one to hurt you. Come then as you were accustomed to come. Anyone who comes from Tuat with a letter from you will not be asked to pay anything, for the country is yours as it was your father's. Salutations. Written on the 10th of Sha'bān 843 A.H. [February 1440]. Signed the most humble servant of his God—Sulaimān.

N A D E L · *Tsoede and the Founding of the Nupe Kingdom*¹

The earliest history of Nupe centres round the figure of Tsoede or Edegi, the culture hero and mythical founder of Nupe kingdom. The genealogies of Nupe kings which are preserved in many places in Nupe country, and which have found their way into the earliest written records of Nupe history which were compiled by Mohammedan scholars and court historians, place his birth in the middle of the fifteenth century. At this time, the tradition runs, there was no kingdom of Nupe, only small chieftainships which, among the Beni, were united in a confederacy under the chief of Nku, a village near the confluence of Niger and Kaduna. At that time the Nupe people were tributary to the *Atta* (king) of the Gara, at Eda (Idah), far down the Niger. The tribute was paid in slaves, and every family head had annually to contribute one male member of his house. These slaves, as tradition has it, were always sister's sons. It so happened that the son of *Atta* Gara came hunting to Nku in Nupe country. Here he met the daughter of the chief of Nku,

¹ From S. F. Nadel, *A Black Byzantium*, London, 1942, pp. 72–74. Professor Nadel (who died in 1956) included in his classic study of the Nupe political system a useful historical section, based principally upon oral tradition.

a young widow, fell in love with her and lived with her for some time. When the death of his father recalled him to his country, to succeed to the throne of the Gara, this woman was pregnant. He left her a charm and a ring to give to their child when it was born. This child was Tsoede. Then the old chief of Nku died, his son became chief, and when Tsoede was 30 years of age the new chief sent him, as his sister's son, as slave to Eda. The *Atta* Gara recognised his son by the charm and ring which he was wearing, and kept him near his person, treating him almost like his legitimate sons. Tsoede stayed for 30 years at his father's court. Once the king fell victim to a mysterious illness which nobody could cure. The court diviner prophesied that only a fruit from a very high oil-palm outside the town, plucked by one man, would cure the king. All his legitimate sons tried, in vain, to obtain the precious fruit. Finally Tsoede made the attempt, and succeeded. But in this attempt he cut his lip so badly, that he looked almost like a man born with a split lip. From this time—and this still holds true today—all hare-lipped boys born in Nupe are named Edegi. Tsoede's achievement, which made him still more loved by his father and honoured by the court, evoked the jealousy of his half-brothers. Thus, when the *Atta* felt his death coming he advised his son to flee, and to return to his own country, the rule of which he bestowed on him as a parting gift. He assisted him in his flight, he gave him riches of all kinds, and bestowed on him various insignia of kingship: a bronze canoe 'as only kings have', manned with twelve Nupe slaves; the bronze *kakati*, the long trumpets which are still the insignia of kings in the whole of Northern Nigeria; state drums hung with brass bells; and the heavy iron chains and fetters which, endowed with strong magic, have become the emblems of the king's judicial power, and are known today as *egba Tsoede*, Chain of Tsoede.

Now comes the story of Tsoede's adventurous flight from Eda, travelling up-river, hotly pursued by his half-brothers and their men. On the way he is helped by two men whom he later rewards by making them chief and second-in-command of the Kyedye tribe. When he reaches the Kaduna river he turns into a creek called Ega, and lies here in hiding till his pursuers, tired of their fruitless search, return to Eda. Tsoede and his men leave the canoe and sink it in the river; the people of Ega still

perform an annual sacrifice on the spot, where, as the tradition has it, Tsoede's canoe was sunk, and at these ceremonies they are able, you are told, to see the bright bronze of the canoe glitter in the water. Tsoede then went to Nupeko, a village nearby, killed the chief, and made himself chief of the place. He conquered Nku, the town of his maternal uncle, made himself the ruler of all Beni (or Nupe—all informants are vague on this point), and assumed the title *Etsu*, king. He made the twelve men who accompanied him from Eda the chiefs of the twelve towns of Beni and bestowed on them the sacred insignia of chieftainship, brass bangles and magic chains. The present chiefs of Beni (as far as their 'towns' still survive) claim descent from these twelve men, and still treasure bangles or chains as insignia of chieftainship. Tsoede carried out big and victorious wars against many tribes and kingdoms, conquering in the south the countries of Yagba, Bunu (two sections of the Yoruba), Kakanda, as far as Akoko, and in the north the countries of Ebe, Kamberi, and Kamuku. He resided first in Nupeko, which name means 'Great Nupe', for eight years, and when Nupeko grew too small, he built the new capital of Gbara, on the Kaduna, which was to remain the *ezi'tsu*, the King's Town, till the Fulani conquest. At the time his residence is said to have counted 5,555 horses, so many in fact, that there was no room for them in Gbara, and one of Tsoede's sons, Abdu, who was in charge of the horses, crossed the Kaduna and founded on the opposite bank a place which is still known by the name of Dokomba, 'Horse Place'.

Apart from the royal insignia and emblems of magic Tsoede is said to have brought to Nupe from Eda certain crafts and techniques hitherto unknown in the country. He brought with him blacksmiths and brass-smiths who taught the crude blacksmiths of Nupe their more advanced technique;¹ the canoe-men who came with him imported into Nupe the craft of building large canoes of which the Nupe are said to have been ignorant at that time. . . .

¹ See Plate 2.

JOHNSON · *The Oyo Empire: The Reign of Sango*¹

Sango, son of Oranyan, and brother of Ajaka, was the fourth King of Yoruba. He was of a very wild disposition, fiery temper, and skilful in sleight of hand tricks. He had a habit of emitting fire and smoke out of his mouth, by which he greatly increased the dread his subjects had of him.

The Olowu² at this time appeared to have been more powerful than the King of Oyo, for after the death of the uncle Oranyan, he compelled his cousin, the peaceful Ajaka, to pay tribute to him. This was probably the reason why Ajaka was deposed.

On Sango's coming to the throne, being a much younger man, the Olowu meant to take advantage of his youth; he demanded the tribute of him, but Sango refused to acknowledge his primacy, notwithstanding the Olowu's threat to deprive him of his wives and children; consequently his capital was besieged and a sharp fight ensued. Sango there displayed his wonted bravery as well as his tricks; volumes of smoke issuing from his mouth and nostrils so terrified the Olowu and his army that they became panic stricken and were completely routed and put to flight.

Sango pushed on his advantage, and with every fresh victory he was the more firmly established on the throne; he thereby became elated and was tyrannical. . . .

The seat of government was permanently removed from Oko (or as some would have it, from Ile Ife) to Oyo, the ancient 'Eyeo or Katunga'.³

Sango reigned for seven years, the whole of which period was marked by his restlessness. He fought many battles and was fond of making charms. He was said to have the knowledge of some preparations by which he could attract lightning. The palace at Oyo was built at the foot of a hill called Oke Ajaka (Ajaka's

¹ From Samuel Johnson, *History of the Yorubas* (see above, Sect. I, p. 59), pp. 149–52. The story of Sango (Shango), the legendary king who became deified as the Yoruba god of thunder and lightning, is included at this point, not because he can be definitely referred to the fifteenth century, but because this was probably the period when the Kingdom of Oyo was going through its first phase of military expansion, with which Sango is associated.

² One of the four senior chiefs of Oyo, normally subject to the king, or *Alafin*.

³ Old Oyo, or Katunga, lies about 100 miles north of modern Oyo.

hill). One day the King ascended this hill accompanied by his courtiers and some of his slaves, among whom were two favourites, Biri and Omiran; some of his cousins went with him, but none of his children. He was minded to try the preparation he had in hand; thinking it might have been damp and useless, he first made the experiment on his own house. But it took effect; a storm was immediately raised and the lightning had struck the palace before they came down the hill, and the buildings were on fire. Many of Sango's wives and his children perished in this catastrophe.

Sango, who was the author of his own misfortunes, became alarmed and dismayed at what had happened, and from a broken heart he was resolved to abdicate the throne and retire to the court of his maternal grandfather, Elempé king of the Nupes.

All Oyo was now astir, not only to sympathize with the King, but also to dissuade him from carrying out his resolution; but he could not bear any opposition, and so mad was he that he even used his sword against some of his loyal subjects who ventured to remonstrate with him, and who promised to replace for him his dead wives by others, by whom he might beget children, and so in time make good his present losses.

According to other accounts, he did not abdicate of his own free will, but was asked to do so by a strong party in the state. Both accounts may be true; there may have been two parties, for to this day Yorubas have an abhorrence of a King given to making deadly charms; because, for one who already has absolute power invested in him by law, this strange power can only be used spitefully, so that no one near him would be safe.

He was said to have caused 160 persons to be slain in a fit of anger, of those who were showing much concern and over-anxiety on his behalf, and who would prevent him by force from carrying out his resolve.

Thus determined, he set out on his fateful journey with a few followers. Biri, his head slave and favourite, was the first to regret the step taken, and to urge on his master to yield to the entreaties of those citizens of Oyo who with all loyalty promised to replace his losses, as far as man can do it, and to rebuild the palace; but, finding the King inexorable, he forsook him and returned to the city with all his followers; Omiran likewise

followed his example, and the King was thus left alone. He now repented his rashness, especially when he found himself deserted by his favourite Biri. He could not proceed alone, and for shame he could not return home, and so he was resolved to put an end to his own life; and climbing on a shea butter tree, he hanged himself.

His friends hearing of this tragedy went immediately and performed for him the last act of kindness, by burying his remains under the same tree.

On hearing of the King's death, his personal friends followed his example, and died with him. Biri committed suicide at Koso (where the King died); Omiram did the same. His cousin Omo Sanda committed suicide at Papo; Babayanmi at Sele; Obei at Jakuta, and Oya, his favourite wife, at Ira.

Thus ended the life of this remarkable personage, who once ruled over all the Yorubas and Popos.¹ He was afterwards deified and is still worshipped by all of the Yoruba race as the god of thunder and lightning.

In every Yoruba and Popo town to this day, whenever there is a flash of lightning followed by a peal of thunder, it is usual to hear from the populace shouts of 'Ka wo o,' 'Ka biye si' ('welcome to your majesty', 'long live the King').

Ajaka his brother was now recalled from exile, and he once more held the reins of government.

Salekuodi was the Basorun² of this reign.

E G H A R E V B A · *Benin: Ewuare the Great*³

After the murder of Uwaifiokun, Ogun was crowned the Oba of Benin with the title Ewuare (Oworuare) meaning 'it is cool' or 'the trouble has ceased'. Prior to his accession he caused a great conflagration which lasted two days and two nights in the City, as a revenge for his banishment.

Ewuare was a great magician, physician, traveller and warrior. He was also powerful, courageous and sagacious.

¹ The Popo inhabit southern Dahomey, west of Yoruba territory.

² The head of the Council of State: an office whose holder had the main voice in choosing the king (the *Alafin*) and the power to reject a king who proved tyrannical or unpopular (see Sect. V, p. 137).

³ J. U. Egharevba, *A Short History of Benin*, pp. 15–19. See above, Sect. I, p. 62.

He fought against and captured 201 towns and villages in Ekiti, Eka, Ikare, Kukuruku, and the Ibo country on this side of the river Niger. He took their petty rulers captive and caused the people to pay tribute to him.

He made good roads in Benin City and the street known as Akpakpava. In fact the town rose to importance and gained the name City during his reign. . . .

He made powerful charms, and had them buried at each of the nine gateways to the City, to nullify any evil charms which might be brought by people of other countries to injure his subjects.

These doings earned for him the title Ewuare Ogidigan (Ewuare the Great). If he was unable to declare an open challenge to his opponents he would resort to stratagem and tricks with his magical bag called agba-oko. . . .

Ewuare was the first Oba of Benin to come into contact with Europeans, for Ruy de Sequeira visited Benin City in 1472. . . .

Ewuare greatly encouraged ivory and wood carving in Benin. His first carver Eghoghomaghan is famous, and his successors owe much to his designs. Ewuare was also the inventor of Eziken, a wind instrument like a fife, and Ema-Edo, the royal band.

He created the Eghaevbo (State council), the members of which are, Iyase, Esogban, Eson and Osuma, with the Iyase of Benin at their head.¹ He also created the title of Eriyo. The royal beads and scarlet clothes were introduced to Benin by him, and he was the originator of the 'bachelor's camp' which now forms part of the rites before the coronation of an Oba.

DE BARROS · *Benin: The Arrival of the Portuguese*²

How the Kingdom of Beny was discovered

Though the Christianising of these people of the Congo progressed greatly to the glory of God, through the conversion of

¹ On the *Eghaevo n'Ore*, or 'town chiefs', their leader, the *Iyase*—whose office 'was undoubtedly the most influential in the state, after the kingship'—and their relationship to the State Council and the Oba, see Bradbury, *The Benin Kingdom*, pp. 36–37 and 43–44.

² From João de Barros, *Da Asia*, First Decade, book iii, ch. 3, quoted in G. R. Crone, *The Voyages of Cadamosto and other Documents*, London, Hakluyt Society, 1937, pp. 124–5. De Barros (1496–1570) was Commander of S. Jorge da Mina from 1522 to 1525; Treasurer of the *Casa da India, Mina e Ceuta*, 1525–8; and Steward of the *Casa* from 1532 to 1567. The First Decade of *Da Asia* was published in 1553.

their King, little profit accrued from what the King did in the matter of the request of the King of Beny, whose kingdom lay between that of Congo and the Castle of S. Jorge da Mina.¹ For at the time of Diogo Cam's first return from Congo, in the year fourteen hundred and eighty six, this King of Beny also sent to solicit the King to dispatch thither priests who might instruct him in the Faith. This country had already been visited in the previous year by Fernão do Po, who had discovered this coast and also an island near the land, now known by his name. On account of its size he called it Ilha Formosa—but it has lost this name and bears that of its discoverer.² This emissary of the King of Beny came with João Affonso d'Aveiro, who had been sent to explore the coast by the King, and who brought back the first pepper from these parts of Guinea to the Kingdom. This pepper is called by us *de rabo* (long-tailed)—because the stem on which it grows comes away with it—to distinguish it from that obtained from India. The King sent some to Flanders, but it was never held in as high esteem as the Indian. As this kingdom of Beny was near the Castle of S. Jorge da Mina, and as the Negroes who brought gold to the market place were ready to buy slaves to carry their merchandize, the King ordered the building of a factory in a port of Beny, called Gato [Gwato], whither there were brought for sale a great number of those slaves who were bartered very profitably at the Mina, for the merchants of gold gave twice the value obtainable for them in the Kingdom. But, as the King of Beny was very much under the influence of his idolatries, and sought the priests rather to make himself powerful against his neighbours with our favour than from a desire for baptism, he profited little from the ministrations of those sent thither. On this account they were recalled, and also the officers of the Factory, for the place was very unhealthy, and among the persons of note who died was this João Affonso d'Aveiro, the first to establish it. However, for a considerable time afterwards, both during the life of Dom João and of Dom Manuel, this sale of slaves continued from Beny to Mina, for ordinarily the ships that left this kingdom went to Beny to buy the slaves, and then carried them to the Mina, until this trade was altered on account of the great inconveniences which arose. . . .

¹ Elmina, near Cape Coast, in modern Ghana.

² Modern Fernando Po.

THE KANO CHRONICLE · The Growth of Trade and Learning¹

. . . In Yakubu's time the Fulani came to Hausaland from Mali, bringing with them books on Divinity and Etymology. Formerly our doctors had, in addition to the Koran, only the books of the Law and the Traditions [*Hadīth*]. The Fulani passed by and went to Bornu leaving a few men in Hausaland, together with some slaves and people who were tired of journeying. At this time too the Asbenawa² came to Gobir, and salt became common in Hausaland. In the following year merchants from Gwanja began coming to Katsina; Beriberi³ came in large numbers, and also Turawa.⁴ Some of them settled in Kano and some passed on to Katsina and settled there. There was no war in Hausaland in Yakubu's time. He sent ten horses to the Sarkin Nupe in order to buy eunuchs. The Sarkin Nupe gave him twelve eunuchs. Yakubu ruled Kano eleven years.

Runfa was the author of twelve innovations in Kano. . . . The next year he extended the walls towards the Kofan Mata⁵ from the Kofan Dagachi and continued the work to Kofan Gertawasa and Kofan Kawayi, and from the Kofan Naissa to the Kofan Kansakali. The next year he entered his house.⁶ He established the Kurmi market.⁷ He was the first Sarki who used 'Dawakin Zaggi'⁸ in the war with Katsina. He was the first Sarki who practised 'Kame'.⁹ He appointed Durman to go round the dwellings of the Indabawa¹⁰ and take every first-born virgin for him. He was the first Sarki to have a

¹ From *The Kano Chronicle*, in Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs*, iii, pp. 111–12. Yakubu reigned from approximately 1452 to 1463, and Muhammad Runfa (Rimfa) from 1463 to 1499 (Palmer's dating). This is the first documentary evidence of Fulani penetration into Hausaland, and the first reference to trade relations between Kano and Gonja (Gwanja), in what is now northern Ghana.

² People of Asben, i.e. Aïr, in the Sahara, some 400 miles north-east of Gobir.

³ People of Bornu.

⁴ *Turawa* (sing. *Bature*) is the modern Hausa word for 'Europeans'. Palmer translates it here as 'Arabs', but this is doubtful.

⁵ *Kofan*, properly *Kofar*, gate of. . . .

⁶ i.e. he built a new palace, still known as the *Gidan Runfa* (Hogben, p. 71).

⁷ The main market in Kano city.

⁸ Foot-soldiers accompanying and taking cover among the horses (Hogben).

⁹ *Kame*, probably 'catching women and girls to keep as concubines': connects with the following items.

¹⁰ The people of Indabo, a town in Kano Province.

thousand wives. He began the custom of 'Kulle'.¹ He began the 'Tara-ta-Kano'.² He was the first to have 'Kakaki' and 'Fignini'³ and ostrich feather sandals. It was in his reign that the 'id prayers'⁴ were first performed in Kano at Shadakoko. He began the custom of giving to eunuchs the offices of state. . . . Surely there was no Sarki more powerful than Runfa. He was sung as 'the Arab Sarki, of wide sway'. In his time occurred the first war with Katsina. It lasted eleven years, without either side winning. He ruled thirty-seven years.

AL-MAGHILI · *The Obligations of Princes*⁵

The sojourn of a prince in the city breeds all manner of trouble and harm. The bird of prey abides in open and wild places. Vigorous is the cock as he struts round his domains. The eagle can only win his realm by firm resolve, and the cock's voice is strong as he masters the hens. Ride, then, the horses of resolution upon the saddles of prudence. Cherish the land from the spoiling drought, from the raging wind, the dust-laden storm, the raucous thunder, the gleaming lightning, the shattering fireball and the beating rain. Kingdoms are held by the sword, not by delays. Can fear be thrust back except by causing fear?

Allow only the nearest of your friends to bring you food and

¹ *Kulle*, purdah, wife-seclusion.

² Literally 'the nine of Kano': possibly a reference to face-markings.

³ *Kakaki*, long trumpets blown before chiefs; *Fignini*, ostrich-feather fans.

⁴ The 'id al-fitr' festival, following the fast of Ramadan.

⁵ From Shaikh Muhammad al-Maghili, *The Obligations of Princes*, an Essay on Muslim Kingship, translated from the Arabic by T. H. Baldwin, Beirut, 1932, quoted on the title-page of H. R. Palmer, *The Bornu, Sahara and Sudan*, London, 1936. Al-Maghili was a Muslim theologian, preacher, and politician from Tlemcen in Algeria, who was responsible for the persecutions of the Jews in Sijilmasa and Tuat; obliged to escape southwards to the Sudan, he visited Katsina and Kano, where he wrote this epistle on Kingship for King Muhammad Runfa. Later he became for a time political adviser to Muhammad Askia, the founder of the Askia dynasty at Gao, where he also stimulated an anti-Jewish policy. He eventually died in 1504. This work of al-Maghili's belongs to the class of Islamic literature known as 'Mirrors for Princes', 'written by men of affairs and of letters who had learnt in the school of experience. They are eager to advise rulers . . . how best to conduct the affairs of state. The ruler is the centre of interest and the principal figure of the political scene. His own interest and that of the state are identical in actual fact if not in theory.' See E. I. J. Rosenthal, *Political Thought in Medieval Islam*, Cambridge, 1958, pp. 67-77.

drink and bed and clothes. Do not part with your coat of mail and weapons and let no one approach you save men of trust and virtue. Never sleep in a place of peril. Have near to guard you at all times a band of faithful and gallant men, sentries, bowmen, horse and foot. Times of alarm are not like times of safety. Conceal your secrets from other people until you are master of your undertaking.

AL-SA'DI · *A Timbuktu Scholar in Kano*¹

In his work entitled *Ez-Zil* the most learned lawyer, Ahmad Bāba,² may God have mercy on him, expresses himself thus:— ‘Ahmad ibn ‘Umar ibn Muḥammad ‘Aqīt, ibn ‘Umar, ibn ‘Ali, ibn Yahia, ibn Jedāla, of the Senhaja, of Timbuktu, was my grandfather, the father of my father; he was commonly known as al-Hajj Ahmad. . . . He was a very upright, pious, distinguished man, full of love for the Prophet and devoting himself unceasingly to the reading of poems in honour of Muhammad, and of the *Shifā’* of ‘Iyād.³ Lawyer, lexicographer, grammarian, prosodist, and scholar, he occupied himself with the sciences all his life. His books were numerous, written with his own hand, with copious annotations. At his death he left about 700 volumes. . . .

‘He travelled in the East in the year 890 [1485] and made the pilgrimage to Mecca. There he met al-Jelāl al-Suyūti and Shaikh Khālid al-Waqqād al-Azhari, the prince of grammarians, and other personages. He returned in the period of the revolt

¹ From ‘Abd al-Rahmān ibn ‘Abdullāh al-Sa’di, *Ta’rikh al-Sūdān* (*Tarikh es-Soudan*, trans. O. Houdas, Paris, 1900), pp. 60–61. Al-Sa’di belonged to an upper-class Timbuktu family; born in 1596, he was appointed notary, and later (in 1627) Imam, of the mosque of Sankoré, at Jenne. In 1637 he returned to Timbuktu, where he held the office of Imam of the city, and was given the title of *Kātib*, or Government Secretary, in return for his public services. His History concludes with the year 1655, and it is probable that he died shortly after this date (Houdas, op. cit., pp. xiii–xiv).

² Abū'l-Abbās Ahmad Bāba al-Timbukti (1553–1627), the famous scholar and biographer, devoted his life to teaching and writing, mainly in Timbuktu, and from 1596 till 1606, after his capture by the Moroccans, in Marrakesh. See *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, i, pp. 191–2.

³ A work dealing with the obligations of Muslims towards the Prophet, by ‘Iyād ibn Mūsa ibn ‘Iyād al-Yahṣībī (died A.D. 1194).

of the Kharijite, Sonni 'Ali,¹ and visited Kano and other towns of the Sudan. He taught theology and succeeded in his teaching, from which numbers of people profited, among whom the most illustrious was the lawyer Mahmūd, to whom he taught among other things the *Mudawwana*.² As a teacher and scholar he showed outstanding learning. He went on working up to his death, which took place on Thursday evening of the month Rabi' II, in the year 943 [Sept./Oct. 1536]: he was then about 80 years old. He was offered the post of Imam, but refused it, as well as other posts of less importance. . . .

PACHECO · *The Beginning of the Slave-Trade*³

Twelve or thirteen leagues upstream from here [i.e. from Lagos] there is a large town called Geebuu,⁴ surrounded by a very large ditch. The river of this country is called in our days Agusale,⁵ and the trade which one can conduct here is the trade in slaves, who are sold for brass bracelets,⁶ at a rate of 12 to 15 bracelets for a slave, and in elephants' tusks. . . .

¹ Sonni 'Ali, ruler of Gao from 1464 to 1492, who greatly extended the frontiers of the Songhai Empire; strongly disapproved of by the '*ulamā*', on account of his unorthodoxy and his brutality towards themselves. Whether he really belonged to the radical-puritan sect of the Kharijites is doubtful. On Sonni 'Ali's attitude to Islam, see Jean Rouch, *Contribution à l'Histoire des Songhay*, Mémoires de l'IFAN, No. 29, Dakar, 1953, p. 185.

² *Al-Mudawwana*, a manual of Maliki law, by 'Abd ar-Rahmān ibn al-Qāsim al-'Utaqī (died A.D. 806), a famous pupil of Mālik ibn Anās.

³ From Duarte Pacheco Pereira, *Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis*, edited by R. Mauny, Centro de Estudos da Guiné Portuguesa, No. 19, Bissau, 1956, pp. 130–47. (I have also made use of G. H. T. Kimble's translation, in the Hakluyt Society's edition, London, 1937, pp. 124–9, 132, and 145.) Pacheco Pereira was born at Lisbon some time in the middle of the fifteenth century, and took part in the exploration of the West African coast at the end of the century. He served in the Indies in 1503–5, and is believed to have written his *Esmeraldo*, primarily as a guide for navigators, on his return to Portugal, between 1505 and 1508. After serving as colonial adviser to King Manuel and Governor of S. Jorge da Mina, he died in poverty some time between 1526 and 1534.

⁴ Clearly Ijebu-Ode (not Abeokuta, as Kimble suggests). (A Portuguese league is about 4 English statute miles.)

⁵ The river Ogun.

⁶ Manillas. On the use of manillas as currency in this region, see G. I. Jones, 'Native and Trade Currencies in Southern Nigeria', *Africa*, xxviii. 1, Jan. 1958, pp. 43–53. Mauny points out that this importation of brass and copper assisted the manufacture of the famous Benin 'bronzes': R. Mauny, op. cit., p. 190.

There is no trade in this country [i.e. in the region of Lagos], nor anything from which one can make a profit. All this region of the river Lagua, of which we spoke above, as far as the river Primeiro,¹ and beyond for a distance of a 100 leagues, is all broken up inland by numerous other rivers in such a way that the whole consists of numerous islands. It is very unhealthy, and is very hot almost throughout the year, on account of the proximity of the sun. The middle of the winter occurs here during the months of August and September when it rains heavily. The Negroes of this country are idolaters and circumcised, without having any law, and without knowing the reason for their circumcision. Since these are matters which have not much relation to my subject, it is unnecessary to speak of them....

By this channel towards the sea is a village called Teebuu² and on the other side are some more villages. A league up this river on the left two tributaries enter the main stream: if you ascend the second of these for twelve leagues you find a town called Huguatoo [Gwato], of some 2,000 souls: this is the harbour of the great city of Beny [Benin], which lies nine leagues³ in the interior with a good road between them. Small ships of fifty tons can go as far as Huguatoo. This city is about a league long from gate to gate; it has no wall but is surrounded by a large moat, very wide and deep, which suffices for its defence. I was there four times. Its houses are made of mud-walls covered with palm leaves. The Kingdom of Beny is about eighty leagues long and forty wide; it is usually at war with its neighbours and takes many captives, whom we buy at twelve or fifteen brass bracelets each, or for copper bracelets which they prize more; from there the slaves are brought to the castle of S. Jorze da Mina where they are sold for gold. The way of life of these people is full of abuses and fetishes and idolatries, which for brevity's sake I omit....

[In the country of Beny . . . they use as money shells which they call 'iguou', a little larger than these 'Zimbos' of Manicongo; they use them to buy everything, and he who has most is richest . . .]⁴

¹ The river Mahin, presumably.

² Unidentified.

³ Benin actually lies about twenty miles from Gwato.

⁴ Inserted from book iii, ch. 2 (Kemble, p. 145). *Manicongo*, the King of the Congo.

To the East of this Kingdom of Beny, 100 leagues inland, there is known to be a country which has at this time a King called Licasaguou.¹ He is said to be lord of many peoples and to possess great power. Near there is another great lord, who has the name 'Hooguanee'. He is considered among the Negroes as the Pope is among us.² There is in these regions black pepper, much stronger than that of the Indies; its seeds are almost the same size; but, while the pepper of the Indies is wrinkled, this has a smooth surface. There are in this country wild men who live in the mountains and the forests of this region, whom the Negroes of Beny call Oosaa.³ They are very strong and covered with bristles like pigs. They have all the characteristics of a human being, except that they shout instead of talking; I have heard their shouts at night, and possess the skin of one of these wild creatures. In this country there are many elephants, whose teeth we often buy, calling them *marfim* [ivory]. There are also many leopards and other animals of various kinds, as well as birds, which are so different from those found in our Europe that, at the beginning of the discovery of this part of the world, those who saw these things and told of them were not believed, until the experience of those who followed them meant that eventually both accounts were believed. A hundred leagues up the principal branch of this Fermoso [Benin] River one reaches a region of Negroes called Opuu.⁴ There there is a great deal of pepper, ivory, and some slaves. . . . The people of Beny and its districts have a line above their eyebrows such as no other Negroes have —neither of the same type nor in the same place. On account of this distinguishing mark they are easily recognised. . . .

Beyond the Fermoso River, of which we spoke above, at five leagues distant, is a river with quite a large mouth which we call the Escravos River; this name was given it when it was discovered on account of two slaves that were obtained by barter there. . . . Since in this Escravos River there is no trade, and nothing else worthy of note, it is unprofitable to waste time speaking further of it.

¹ Mauny, following P. A. Talbot, *The Peoples of Southern Nigeria*, i, pp. 281–2, identifies Licosaguou with the Alafin of Oyo. There are various grounds for questioning this identification, among them the fact that Oyo lies north-west, not east, of Benin.

² i.e. the Oni of Ife: see Sect. IV, p. 96.

³ Mauny (op. cit.) suggests chimpanzees.

⁴ Mauny suggests that Nupe may be meant.

Five leagues beyond the Escravos River is another river called the Forcados River: it was given this name because at the moment when it was discovered, large birds with forked tails like swallows were found there—from which it received its name. . . .

Whoever enters this river [the Forcados] finds two arms—one to the right, the other to the left. Five leagues upstream along the left arm trade is carried on, principally in slaves, in cotton stuff, some leopard skins, palm-oil, and blue beads with red stripes which they call ‘coris’—and other things which we are accustomed to buy here for brass and copper bracelets. All these commodities have value at the castle of Sam Jorze da Mina. The Factor of our prince sells them to Negro traders in exchange for gold. The people of this river are called Huela, and further inland there is another country which is called Subou [Sobo]; it is very thickly populated. There there is plenty of pepper of the same quality as we have described above. . . . Beyond these there are other Negroes called Jos [Ijaw], who possess a large territory; they are warlike people and cannibals. The main trade of this country is in slaves and a little ivory. . . .

At the mouth of the River Real,¹ within the creek above mentioned, there is a very large village, consisting of about 2,000 souls. Much salt is made here, and in this country are to be found the largest canoes, made of a single trunk, that are known in the whole of the Ethiopia of Guinea; some are so large that they hold 80 men. They travel distances of a hundred leagues and more down the river, and bring many yams, which are very good here and make a tolerable diet, many slaves, cows, goats, and sheep. They call sheep *bozy*.² All this they sell for salt to the Negroes of the aforesaid village. The people of our ships buy these goods for copper bracelets, which are valued highly here, more than brass ones. With 8 or 10 bracelets, one can buy a good slave here. The Negroes of this region go about quite naked; they wear round their necks copper collars as thick as one’s finger. They also carry *aguumias* (daggers) such as the white Moors of Barbary are accustomed to carry. They are warriors who rarely live at peace. . . .

¹ The Bonny and New Calabar River.

² See G. I. Jones in *Africa*, xxviii. 1, pp. 43–44.

SECTION FOUR

The Sixteenth Century

DE BARROS · *Benin: Relations with Ife*¹

Among the many things which the King Don João learnt from the ambassador of the King of Beny, and also from João Affonso d'Aveiro, of what they had been told by the inhabitants of these regions, was that to the east of Beny at twenty moons' journey—which according to their account, and the short journeys they make, would be about two hundred and fifty of our leagues—there lived the most powerful monarch of these parts called Ogane.² Among the pagan chiefs of the territories of Beny he was held in as great veneration as is the Supreme Pontiff with us. In accordance with a very ancient custom, the King of Beny, on ascending the throne, sends ambassadors to him with rich gifts to announce that by the decease of his predecessor he has succeeded to the Kingdom of Beny, and to request confirmation. To signify his assent, the Prince Ogane sends the King a staff and a headpiece of shining brass, fashioned like a Spanish helmet, in place of a crown and sceptre. He also sends a cross, likewise of brass, to be worn round the neck, a holy and religious emblem similar to that worn by the Commendatores of the Order of Saint John. Without these emblems the people do not recognise him as lawful ruler, nor can he call himself truly King. All the time this ambassador is at the court of Ogane he never sees the prince, but only the curtains of silk behind which he sits, for he is regarded as sacred. When the ambassador is leaving, he is shown a foot below the curtains as

¹ From De Barros, *Da Asia*, First Decade, book iii, in G. R. Crone, *Voyages of Cadamosto*, pp. 126–7 (see Sect. III, p. 87, above).

² ‘Presumably the Oni of Ife whom the Edo still call Oghene’ (R. E. Bradbury, *The Benin Kingdom*, p. 20). But Ife lies north-west, not east, of Benin. Cf. Sect. III, p. 94.



(b) Bronze figure of a
Portuguese arquebusier,
probably made in the
sixteenth century



(a) Bronze huntsman, of a
more imaginative style than
that usually associated with
Benin, probably coming
from the Niger valley.
Found at Benin

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PLATE 4



Benin ivory pectoral mask

Reproduced by permission of the Trustees of the British Museum

a sign that the prince is within and agrees to the matters he has raised; this foot they reverence as though it were a sacred relic. As a kind of reward for the hardships of such a journey the ambassador receives a small cross, similar to that sent to the King, which is thrown round his neck to signify that he is free and exempt from all servitudes, and privileged in this native country, as the Commendatores are with us. I myself knew this, but in order to be able to write it with authority (although the King Don João in his time had enquired well into it), when in the year fifteen hundred and forty certain ambassadors of the King of Beny came to this Kingdom, among whom was a man of about seventy years of age who was wearing one of these crosses, I asked him the reason, and he gave an explanation similar to the above. . . .

DE PINA · EGHAREVBA · *Benin: King Esigie and the Portuguese Missionaries*¹

1. The king of Beny sent as ambassador to the king a negro, one of his captains, from a harbouring place by the sea, which is called Ugato [Gwato], because he desired to learn more about these lands, the arrival of people from them in his country being regarded as an unusual novelty. This ambassador was a man of good speech and natural wisdom. Great feasts were held in his honour, and he was shown many of the good things of these kingdoms. He returned to his land in a ship of the king's, who at his departure made him a gift of rich clothes for himself and his wife: and through him he also sent a rich present to the king of such things as he understood he would greatly prize. Moreover, he sent holy and most catholic advisers with praiseworthy admonitions for the faith to administer a stern rebuke about the heresies and great idolatries and fetishes, which the negroes practise in that land. . . .

¹ The first of these extracts is from Ruy de Pina, *Chronica del Rey Dom João II*, ch. 24, translated in J. W. Blake, *Europeans in West Africa*, London, Hakluyt Society, 1942, i, pp. 78–79. De Pina (1440–1523) was Secretary to the Royal Court of Portugal, and in 1497 became its chief chronicler: in this capacity he wrote the chronicles of the lives and reigns of Kings Duarte, Affonso V, and John II (Blake, i, p. 42). The second is from J. U. Egharevba, *A Short History of Benin* (see Sect. I, p. 62), pp. 27–31.

2. It is said that John Affonso d'Aveiro came to Benin City for the second time during this [Esigie's] reign. He advised the Oba to become a Christian, and said that Christianity would make his country better. Esigie therefore sent Ohen-okun of Gwatto with him as an Ambassador to the King of Portugal, asking him to send priests who would teach him and his people the faith. In reply the King of Portugal sent Roman Catholic missionaries and many rich presents, such as a copper stool (Erhe), coral beads and a big umbrella, with an entreaty that Esigie should embrace the faith. . . .

John Affonso d'Aveiro with the other missionaries remained in Benin to carry on the mission work, and churches were built at Ogbelaka, Idunmerie and Akpapkava (Ikpoa Road), the last named being the 'Holy Cross Cathedral'. The residence of the Fathers was situated between the present Roman Catholic School and John Holt's Store. They had another at Idunmwu-Ebo, and the missionary cemetery was where the Government School now stands. The work of the Mission made progress and thousands of people were baptized before the death of the great missionary John Affonso d'Aveiro, who was buried with great lamentations by the Oba and the Christians at Benin City.

The Missionaries went with Esigie to the Idah war which took place in 1515–1516.¹ This war was caused by the then Oliha who had a beautiful wife named Imaguero. . . .

In 1540 Esigie made a crucifix in brass and sent it to the King of Portugal as a present. Valuable presents were sent to the Oba in return, including a copy of a Roman Catholic Catechism, which was placed in the house of Iwebo. This was unfortunately destroyed when the palace was burnt by Prince Ogbebo during the civil war between Osemwede and Ogbebo early in 1816.

Esigie encouraged and improved the brass work which had been introduced to Benin by Oba Oguola. He invented Iwoki-iwe-uki (astrology) and he could speak and read the Portuguese language. During this reign guns were used in Benin for the first time. . . .

¹ Idah: the capital of the Igala, on the river Niger, below the confluence with the Benue. For evidence of connexions between the art of Igala and Benin, see R. G. Armstrong, *Peoples of the Niger-Benue Confluence*, Ethnographic Survey, Western Africa, X, London, 1955, p. 81.

Tradition says that during this reign Onitsha was founded by people who migrated from Benin. The robber Atakparhakpa lived in Benin at this time, and it was he who introduced the chief's drum 'Emigham' from Idah to Benin. The famous diviner and magician Azagbaghedi also lived during this period.

Esigie lived to a great age and died peacefully after a long reign.

PIRES · *The Portuguese Embassy at the Court of Benin*¹

Most high and mighty king and prince, our lord. May God increase your royal estate. Sir, your highness will be pleased to know how Pero Baroso gave me a letter from your highness, which made me rejoice that your highness should be mindful of so humble a man as me; and now I render account to your highness in regard to the letter which you sent me. Sir, with reference to what you say about my being in very great favour with the king of Benjm [Benin], it is truly so; because the king of Benjm is pleased with what I said in favour of your highness, and he desires to be your very good friend and speaks nothing save what concerns Our Lord and your interest; and so he is very glad, and likewise all his noblemen and his people; and your highness will shortly know about this. The favour which the king of Benjm accords us is due to his love of your highness; and thus he pays us high honour and sets us at table to dine with his son, and no part of his court is hidden from us but all the doors are open. Sir, when these priests arrived in Benjm, the delight of the king of Benjm was so great that I do not know how to describe it, and likewise that of all his people; and he sent for them at once; and they remained with him for one whole year in war. The priests and we reminded him of the embassy of your highness, and he replied to us that he was very satisfied with it; but since he was at war, that he could do nothing until he returned to Benjm, because he needed leisure for such a deep mystery as this; as soon as he was in Benjm, he would fulfil his promise to your highness, and he would so behave as to

¹ This is a letter from Duarte Pires, who was the Portuguese representative, and probably Factor, in Benin, to King Manuel of Portugal, dated 20 Oct. 1516: translated from Torre do Tombo, Corpo chronologico, pt. 1, maço 20, no. 18, and published in J. W. Blake, *Europeans in West Africa, 1450–1560*, i, pp. 123–4. See Introduction, p. 30.

give great pleasure to your highness and to all your kingdom. So it was that, at the end of one year, in the month of August, the king gave his son and some of his noblemen—the greatest in his kingdom—so that they might become Christians; and also he ordered a church to be built in Benjm; and they made them Christians straightway; and also they are teaching them to read, and your highness will be pleased to know that they are very good learners. Moreover, sir, the king of Benjm hopes to finish his war this summer, and we shall return to Benjm; and I shall give your highness an account of everything that happens. Sir, I Duarte Pires, and Joham Sobrynh, a resident in the island of O Principe, and Grygoryo Lourenço, a black man and formerly the servant of Francysquo Lourenço, all remain in the service of your highness, and we have submitted proposals on your behalf to the king of Benjm, and we have described to him how your highness is a great lord and how you can make him a great lord. Done in this war, on 20 October 1516.

To our lord the king.

Duarte Pires.

A PORTUGUESE PILOT · *Benin: The Funeral of the Divine King*¹

To understand the negro traffic, one must know that over all the African coast facing west there are various countries and provinces, such as Guinea, the coast of Melegete, the kingdom of Benin, the kingdom of Manicōgo, six degrees from the equator and towards the south pole. There are many tribes and negro kings here, and also communities which are partly Mohammedan and partly Heathen. These are constantly making war among themselves. The kings are worshipped by their subjects, who believe that they come from heaven, and speak of them always with great reverence, at a distance and on bended knees. Great ceremony surrounds them, and many of

¹ From the account of a 'Voyage from Lisboa to the island of San Thomé south of the Equator, described by a Portuguese pilot, and sent to his magnificence Count Rimondo della Torre, gentleman of Verona, and translated from Portuguese into Italian', published in Giovanni Battista Ramusio, *Navigazioni e Viaggi*, Venice, 1550, and retranslated by J. W. Blake in *Europeans in West Africa*, i, pp. 150–1. The account was written in about the year 1540, according to Blake, and 'the author may have been any one of the scores of Portuguese pilots who at this time were familiar with the navigation from Lisbon to the island of São Thomé'.

these kings never allow themselves to be seen eating, so as not to destroy the belief of their subjects that they can live without food. They worship the sun, and believe that spirits are immortal, and that after death they go to the sun. Among others, there is in the kingdom of Benin an ancient custom, observed to the present day, that when the king dies, the people all assemble in a large field, in the centre of which is a very deep well, wider at the bottom than at the mouth. They cast the body of the dead king into this well, and all his friends and servants gather round, and those who are judged to have been most dear to and favoured by the king (this includes not a few, as all are anxious for the honour) voluntarily go down to keep him company. When they have done so, the people place a great stone over the mouth of the well, and remain by it day and night. On the second day, a few deputies remove the stone, and ask those below what they know, and if any of them have already gone to serve the king; and the reply is, No. On the third day, the same question is asked, and someone then replies that so-and-so, mentioning a name, has been the first to go, and so-and-so the second. It is considered highly praiseworthy to be the first, and he is spoken of with the greatest admiration by all the people, and considered happy and blessed. After four or five days all these unfortunate people die. When this is apparent to those above, since none reply to their questions, they inform their new king; who causes a great fire to be lit near the well, where numerous animals are roasted. These are given to the people to eat, and he with great ceremony is declared to be the true king, and takes the oath to govern well.

LEO AFRICANUS · *The Hausa States and Bornu*¹*Of the province of Cano*

The great province of Cano standeth eastward of the river Niger almost five hundred miles. The greatest part of the

¹ From Leo Africanus, *The History and Description of Africa done into English by John Pory*, ed. Robert Brown, Hakluyt Society, London, 1896, iii, pp. 291–4. See also the excellent new annotated edition, Jean-Léon l'Africain, *Déscription de l'Afrique*, ed. A. Epaulard, Paris, 1956, ii, pp. 476–81. Leo Africanus, originally known as al-Hasan ibn Muhammad al-Wazzān al-Zayyāti, was born at Granada between 1489 and 1495; studied at the University of Fez; at the age of about

inhabitants dwelling in villages are some of them herdsmen and others husbandmen. Here groweth abundance of corn, of rice, and of cotton. Also here are many deserts and wilde woodie mountains containing many springs of water. In these woods growe plentie of wilde citrons and lemons, which differ not much in taste from the best of all. In the midst of this province standeth a towne called by the same name, the walles and houses whereof are built for the most part of a kind of chalke. The inhabitants are rich merchants and most civill people. Their King was in times past of great puissance, and had mighty troupes of horsemen at his command; but he hath since been constrained to pay tribute unto the Kings of Zegzeg and Casena.¹ Afterwards Ischia the King of Tombuto² forming friendship with the two foresaid Kings treacherously slew them both. And then he waged warre against the King of Cano, whom after a long siege he tooke, and compelled him to marie one of his daughters, restoring him againe to his kingdom, conditionally that he should pay unto him the third part of all his tribute: and the said King of Tombuto hath some of his courtiers perpetually residing at Cano for the receipt.

Of the Kingdom of Casena

Casena, bordering eastward upon the kingdom last described, is full of mountains and drie fields, which yield not notwithstanding great store of barlie and millfeed. The inhabitants are all extremely black, having great noses and blubber lips. They dwell in most forlorne and base cottages; neither shall you find any of their villages containing above three hundred families. And besides their base estate they are mightily oppressed with

seventeen accompanied his uncle on a diplomatic mission from the Sultan of Morocco to the court of Muḥammad Askia, ruler of the Gao Empire; followed this by a second journey through the Sudan; was captured by a Sicilian corsair in about 1518, and handed over to Pope Leo X, who baptized him with his own names Johannes Leo de Medicis in 1520. Leo's *Description of Africa* was written some time during the 1520's, and first published in Italian by Ramusio in 1550. For further information about Leo and his work, see M. Epaulard's Introduction, and Bovill, *The Golden Trade of the Moors*, ch. 12, pp. 121–33.

¹ i.e. Zaria and Katsina.

² i.e. al-Hajj Askia Muḥammad, otherwise known as Askia the Great, ruler of the Gao Empire from 1493 to 1528, and founder of the Askia dynasty. For some account of Askia the Great, see Bovill, op. cit., pp. 105–9, and Rouch, *Contribution à l'histoire des Songhay*, pp. 191–9. Timbuktu was in fact the major cultural and intellectual centre within the Empire, of which Gao was the capital.

famine: a King they had in times past whom the foresaid Ischia slew, since whose death they have all been tributarie unto Ischia.

Of the Kingdom of Zegzeg

The south-east part thereof bordereth upon Cano, and is distant from Casena almost an hundred and fifty miles. The inhabitants are rich and have great traffique with other nations. Some part of this kingdom is plaine, and the residue mountainous, but the mountaines are extremely cold, and the plaines intolerably hot. And because they can hardly endure the sharpness of winter, they kindle great fires in the midst of their houses, laying the coles thereof under their high bedsteads, and so betaking themselves to sleepe. Their fields abounding in water are exceedingly fruitfull, and their houses are built like the houses of the kingdom of Kasena. They had a King of their own in times past, who being sleine by Ischia (as is aforesaid) they have ever since beene subject unto the said Ischia.

Of the kingdom of Zanfara

The region of Zanfara, bordering eastward upon Zegzeg, is inhabited by most base and rusticall people. Their fields abound with rice, mill, and cotton. The inhabitants are tall in stature and extremely black, their visages are broad, and their dispositions most savage and brutish. Their King also was slaine by Ischia, and themselves made tributarie. . . .

Of the kingdome of Borno

The large province of Borno bordering westward upon the province of Guangara, and from thence extending eastward five hundred miles, is distant from the fountain of Niger almost an hundred and fifty miles, the south part thereof adjoining unto the desert of Seu,¹ and the north part unto that desert which lieth towards Barca.² The situation of this kingdome is very uneven, some part thereof being mountainous, and the residue plaine. Upon the plaines are sundry villages inhabited by rich merchants, and abounding with corne. The king of this kingdome and all his followers dwell in a certaine large village.

¹ 'Set', in error, in the text.

² i.e. Cyrenaica.

The mountaines being inhabited by herdesmen and shepherds do bring forth mill and other graine altogether unknownen to us. The inhabitants in summer goe all naked save their privie members which they cover with a piece of leather; but al winter they are clad in skins, and have beds of skins also. They embrace no religion at all, being neither Christians, Mahumetans, nor Jewes, nor of any profession, but living after a brutish manner, and having wives and children in common: and (as I understood of a certaine merchant that abode a long time among them) they have no proper names among them, but everyone is nicknamed according to his length, his fatness, or some other qualitie. They have a most puissant prince, being lineally descended from the Libyan people, called Bardoa. Horsemen he hath in a continual readiness to the number of three thousand, and a huge number of footmen; for all his subjects are so serviceable and obedient unto him, that whensoever he commandeth them, they will arme themselves and follow him whither he pleases to conduct them. They pay unto him none other tribute but the tithes of all their corne:¹ neither hath this king any revenues to maintaine his estate, but only such spoiles as he getteth from his next enemies by often invasions and assaults. He is at perpetuall enmitie with a certaine people inhabiting beyond the desert of Seu; who in times past marching with an huge armie of footmen over the saide desert, wasted a great part of the kingdome of Borno. Whereupon the King of Borno sent for the merchants of Barbary, and willed them to bring him great store of horses: for in this country they use to exchange horses for slaves, and to give fifteene, and sometimes twentie slaves for a horse. And by this meanes there were abundance of horses brought, howbeit the merchants were constrained to stay for their slaves till the King returned home conqueror with a great number of captives, and satisfied his creditors for their horses. And oftentimes it falleth out that the merchants must stay three moneths together, before the King returneth from the warres, but they are all that time maintained at the King's charges. Sometimes he bringeth not home slaves enough to satisfie the merchants: and otherwhiles they are constrained to awaite there a whole yeare togither; for the King maketh invasions but every yeare once, and that at one set and appointed

¹ The authorized Koranic 'tenth', or '*ashūr*.

time of the yeare. Yea I myselfe met with sundrie merchants heere, who despairing of the King's paiment, because they had trusted him an whole yeare, determined never to come thither with horses againe. And yet the King seemeth to be marveilous rich; for his spurres, his bridles, platters, dishes, pots, and other vessels wherein his meate and drinke are brought to the table, are all of pure golde: yea, and the chaines of his dogs and hounds are of golde also. Howbeit this King is extreamly covetous, for he had much rather pay his debts in slaves then in golde. In this kingdom are great multitudes of Negros and of other people, the names of whom (because I tarried here but one moneth) I could not well note. . . .

AL-SA'DI · MUHAMMAD BELLO · *The Rise of Kebbi*¹

i. Towards the end of the twenty-first year [sc. of his reign—26 February 1514 to 15 February 1515] Muhammed Askia² undertook a campaign against al-Udāla, Sultan of Agades, and completed it in the course of the twenty-second year [15 February 1515 to 5 February 1516]. At the moment when he was returning, Kotal, chief of Leka and surnamed Kanta, revolted against him.

This was the cause of the revolt. Kanta, returning with the King from his expedition against Agades, had expected to receive on his arrival in his country, his share of the spoils which had been obtained. Disappointed in this expectation, he mentioned the matter to the *Dendi-Fari*,³ who replied—'If you make such a demand to the King, you will find yourself treated as a rebel.' Kanta made no answer. Later his companions came looking for them, and said—'Where is our share of the spoils?' We have not yet seen it. Why do you not demand it?' Kanta

¹ Of these extracts, the first is taken from al-Sa'di's *Ta'rikh al-Sūdān* (ed. Houdas), pp. 129–30, and the second from Muhammed Bello's *Infaq al-maysūr* (ed. Arnett), pp. 13–15. For al-Sa'di, see Sect. III, p. 91; and for Muhammed Bello, see Sect. I, p. 58.

² Ruler of Gao: see preceding extract.

³ Governor of the Province of Dendi, who enjoyed a special right of access to Askia. (See J. Rouch, *Contribution à l'histoire des Songhay*, p. 192. For a discussion of Kanta's revolt in the context of Songhai history, see Rouch, op. cit., pp. 197–8.)

replied—‘I have indeed asked for it, and the *Dendi-Fari* has assured me that, if I persisted in my demand, I should be treated as a rebel. Now, I would not like to be alone in being treated as a rebel. But, if you support me, I will make the demand.’ ‘Certainly’, they exclaimed, ‘we will be treated as rebels along with you.’ ‘Thank you’, he answered, ‘that is just the assurance that I wanted from you.’

Thereupon Kanta presented himself to the *Dendi-Fari*, renewed his demand, and was faced with a refusal. The revolt broke out at once. In a great battle in which the rebels engaged the King’s troops, they held their own against their enemies, and from then on ceased to recognise the authority of Askia al-Hajj Muhammad. This situation continued until the end of the dynasty of the Songhai rulers, and Kanta maintained his independence. An expedition launched against him in the twenty-third year [5 February 1516 to 24 January 1517] did not produce the least result.

2. The people of Kebbi are descended according to what we are told from a Katsina mother and a Songhai father. The land of Kebbi is extensive and well watered and has many trees and sand. The kingdom of Kebbi dates from the time of Kanta. It is said that Kanta was a slave of the Fulani. He rose up and conquered the towns and ruled countries far and near. It is even said that his rule extended over Katsina and Kano and Gobir and Zazzau and the town of Air and half the land of Songhai. He also made war on Bornu.... He defeated about seven of their armies and took much spoil from them. Then he retired and was returning to his own home when he reached a place called Dugul in the country of Katsina. Now these people were rebels and Kanta had a severe fight with them in which he was wounded by an arrow. He continued his journey homewards till he reached Jirwa and there he died. His people carried his body and buried him in his own house at Surame.

Kanta had three garrison towns. The oldest of them was Ghunghu, then Surame, then Lika. No other kingdom in the past history of these countries ever equalled it in power. Their ruins, though it is about a hundred years since their cities were broken, surpass any we have ever seen.¹

¹ The ruins of Surame are still visible to the west of Sokoto.

AL-SA'DI · *Katsina: The Gao War*¹

In the year 959 [A.D. 1551/2], a conflict broke out between Askia Dāūd² and Kanta, the Sultan of Lika:³ it was concluded by a Treaty of Peace in 960 [1552/3]. Next year, in 961 [1553/4], Askia Dāūd went to Kukia, whence he sent the *Hi-Koi*,⁴ 'Ali Dudo, against Katsina at the head of a detachment consisting of 24 Songhai horsemen. This detachment encountered, at a place called Karfata, a body of 400 horsemen belonging to the people of Libta in the country of Katsina. The two forces engaged in a hand-to-hand fight, which was very long and very bloody.

The Katsina people killed 15 of their enemy, among whom was the *Hi-Koi*, mentioned above, and his brother, Muhammad Benkan Kuma, the son of Faran 'Umar-Komzagho. They took the remaining nine, all of whom were wounded, prisoner—including among them 'Alouaz-Lil, the son of Faran 'Umar-Komzagho and father of Qasem, Bokar-Chili-Idji, Muhammad-Della-Idji, etc. The victors took care of the wounded and gave them the greatest attention. They then set them at liberty and sent them back to Askia Dāūd, telling them that—'men of such quality, endowed with such great valour and such courage, did not deserve to die'. The vigour and daring of these warriors so amazed the people of Katsina that ever afterwards they spoke of them as models to be followed. . . .

EDEN · *English Merchants in Benin*⁵

For when that Windam not satisfied with the gold which he had, and more might have had if he had taried about the Mina,

¹ From al-Sa'di, *Ta'rikh al-Sūdān*, pp. 168–9. See Sect. III, p. 91.

² Askia Dāūd, son of Muhammad Askia, and fourth in succession to him, ruled the Gao Empire from 1549 to 1582. He is described in the *Ta'rikh al-Fettāsh* as 'feared, eloquent, an able administrator; generous, liberal, gay, genuinely fond of jokes' (J. Rouch, *Contribution à l'histoire des Songhay*, p. 203).

³ i.e. Kebbi; see preceding extracts.

⁴ *Hi-Koi*, chief of canoes. Since transport along the Niger played an important part in Gao's campaigns, the *Hi-Koi* was one of the four chief officers in the Gao military organization, to whom, as in this case, command of land operations might be entrusted (see J. Rouch, op. cit., pp. 192 and 206).

⁵ From *The Voyage of M. Thomas Windam to Guinea and the kingdom of Benin, Anno 1553*, in Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*, Glasgow, 1904, vol. vi, pp. 148–50 (iv, pp. 41–43, in the Everyman Edition). This account is by Richard Eden (1521? to 1576), taken from his *Decades of the New World* (1555). J. W. Blake (*Europeans in West Africa*,

commanding the said Pinteado (for so he tooke upon him) to lead the ships to Benin, being under the Equinoctial line, and an hundred and fifty leagues beyond the Mina, where he looked to have their ships laden with pepper: and being counselled of the said Pinteado, considering the late time of the yeere, for that time to go no further, but to make sale of their wares such as they had for gold, wherby they might have bene great gainers: Windam not assenting hereunto, fell into a sudden rage, reviling the sayd Pinteado, calling him Jew, with other opprobrious words, saying, This whoreson Jew hath promised to bring us to such places as are not, or as he cannot bring us unto: but if he do not, I will cut off his eares and naile them to the maste. Pinteado gave the foresaid counsell to go no further for the safegard of the men and their lives, which they should put in danger if they came too late, for the Rossia which is their Winter, not for cold, but for smothering heate, with close and cloudie aire and storming weather, of such putrifying qualitie, that it rotted the coates of their backs: or els for comming to soone for the scorching heat of the sunne, which caused them to linger in the way. But of force and not of will brought he the ships before the river of Benin, where riding at an Anker, they sent their pinnas up into the river 50 or 60 leagues, from whence certaine of the merchants with captaine Pinteado, Francisco a Portugale, Nicholas Lambart gentleman, and other merchants were conducted to the court where the king remained, ten leagues from the river side, whither when they came, they were brought with a great company to the presence of the king, who being a blacke Moore (although not so blacke as the rest) sate in a great huge hall, long and wide, the wals made of earth without windowes, the roofe of thin boords, open in sundry places, like unto lovers¹ to let in the aire.

ii, pp. 254–5) says that ‘as far as is known’, Eden ‘did not visit West Africa in person. His records of the voyages of Windham and Lok to Guinea were based upon what he learned directly or indirectly from others who had taken part in them.’ Eden’s main work was the collection and translation of travel literature, but he also had experience as a civil servant (private secretary to Sir W. Cecil in 1553), and achieved a reputation as a man of science (*D.N.B.*). On this expedition, see R. Tong, ‘Captain Thomas Wyndham and the Voyage to Benin, 1553’, in *History Today*, vii. 4, Apr. 1957, pp. 221–8.

¹ O.E.D. defines ‘lovers’ or ‘louvers’ as an arrangement of sloping boards, laths or slips of glass overlapping each other, so as to admit air, but exclude rain.

And here to speake of the great reverence they give to their king, it is such, that if we would give as much to our Savior Christ, we should remoove from our heads many plagues which we daily deserve for our contempt and impietie.

So it is therfore, that when his noble men are in his presence, they never looke him in the face, but sit cowring, as we upon our knees, so they upon their buttocks, with their elbowes upon their knees, and their hands before their faces, not looking up until the king command them. And when they are comming toward the king, as far as they do see him, they do shew such reverence, sitting on the ground with their faces covered as before. Likewise when they depart from him, they turn not their backs toward him but goe creeping backward with like reverence.

And now to speake somewhat of the communication that was between the king and our men, you shall first understand that he himselfe could speake the Portugall tongue, which he had learned of a child. Therefore after he had commanded our men to stand up, and demanded of them the cause of their comming into that countrey, they answered by Pinteado, that they were merchants traveiling into those parties for the commodities of his countrey, for exchange of wares which they had brought from their countries, being such as should be no lesse commodious for him and his people. The king then having of old lying in a certaine store-house 30 or 40 kintals of Pepper (every kintall being an hundred weight) willed them to looke upon the same, and againe to bring him a sight of such merchandizes as they had brought with them. And thereupon sent with the captaine and the marchants certaine of his men to conduct them to the waters side, with other to bring the ware from the pinnas to the court. Who when they were returned and the wares seen, the king grew to this ende with the merchants to provide in 30 dayes the lading of al their ships with pepper. And in case their merchandizes would not extend to the value of so much pepper, he promised to credite them to their next returne, and thereupon sent the country round about to gather pepper, causing the same to be brought to the court: So that within the space of 30 dayes they had gathered fourescore tunne of pepper.

In the meane season our men partly having no rule of

themselves, but eating without measure of the fruits of the country, and drinking the wine of the Palme trees that droppeth in the night from the cut of the branches of the same, and in such extreme heate running continually into the water, not used before to such sudden and vehement alterations (then the which nothing is more dangerous) were thereby brought into swellings and argues: insomuch that the later time of the yeere comming on, caused them to die sometimes three and sometimes 4 or 5 in a day. . . .

I B N F A R T U A · Mai Idrīs Alooma: Bornu Methods of Warfare¹

In the building of these stockades,² which the experienced thought and sound prudence of our Sultan had established, there was great advantage and usefulness. Firstly in that it obviated the need of tying up animals, so that they could be allowed to roam about in the midst of the camp. The horses and other animals also were unable to stray away. Then again it prevented thieves from entering for infamous and evil purposes, for they were frustrated and turned back. Again it prevented any one from leaving the camp on errands of immorality, debauch or other foolishness. Again when the enemy wished to force an entrance upon us either by treachery or open fighting he was obliged to stand up and occupy himself with the defences before he reached us. If we had taken many captives and much booty and put them inside, we could sleep restfully and the night hours were safe: also if the male or female slaves wished to run away from the camp, they were afraid to go out. . . .

Now our enemies were divided into three groups: the first, those who snatched up by way of plunder whatever they could lay hands upon, living or dead, animals or stores, where and

¹ From Ahmad ibn Fartua, *The Kanem Wars* (in Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs*, i, pp. 49, 52–53, and 55–56). These extracts are taken from Ibn Fartua's account of Idris Alooma's fifth expedition against the Bulala, a people inhabiting the region to the east of Lake Chad, part of the former state of Kanem, with whose royal family Idris was related through his mother. Palmer refers the expedition to the year 1575, but according to Urvoy's chronology it should be dated about ten years later. For a discussion of these military operations, and the methods employed, see Urvoy, *Histoire de l'empire du Bornou*, pp. 75–79.

² The Arabic word for a stockade is *shawkiya*, lit. 'thorn-fence'.

whenever they could lay hands on them and then returned to the place from which they had set out; the second, those who went into battle, following the only drum which was left to them; the third, who wandered at random in the camp until death overtook them, wandering aimlessly without the slightest idea in which direction to go. Now our people, the people of Bornu, were similarly divided into three sections: the first group warriors and fighters like our Sultan and these at that time were few; the second, those who remained behind the palisades and did not venture into battle but remained hidden from view as if cloaked in the veil of God: among these were the Koyam;¹ the third group were the type of people who wander about the inside and outside of a camp and are unskilled in the arts of war.

Our Sultan al-Hajj Idrīs ibn 'Ali (to whom may God give a mighty victory) after returning from without the camp to the interior and after having driven the enemy back towards their own country, came upon the drummers in charge of the enemy's sole surviving drum in the middle of his camp. All his horses were at the last gasp, weak from fatigue and in the lather of perspiration from the heavy day's work. He was quite nonplussed as to how to deal with this situation; yet with his innate sense he asked what would be the best course to adopt to drive out the enemy from the camp, without allowing them to take away the loot they had acquired. He enquired whether there was anyone of sufficient courage to deprive them of their booty: but was met with a blank response. But for the exhaustion of his horse, he would have made no appeal: he himself would have ventured forth on the errand. Had only his chiefs and governors and body-guard commanders shown the same energy and resource on that night the enemy would have given no further trouble.

This was the upshot of the fighting during day-light on Monday, but the pen had written what was to be. . . .

When the Sultan reached the hill called Milmila, the enemy surged forward towards it and the two armies met; our camel corps consisting of Barbars and Koyam did not dismount in spite of the enemy's furious onset in their direction. As for the shield-bearers who had gone to the water with the Wazir, they did not rejoin the Sultan at this time. Consequently when the

¹ Allies of the Kanuri, inhabiting the region west of Chad, who provided the camel corps (see below and Urvoy, op. cit., p. 78).

attack matured, there was a gap in the ranks and the army was not drawn up in its usual formation. The only cavalry and riflemen and shield-bearers in front of the Sultan were a very small party. At that moment the enemy attacked us fiercely and sent a shock through our entire army, piercing our ranks as if they had been sparks of flame or a swarm of locusts, armed with their cutting weapons and shields, fully accoutred and driven on from behind by their cavalry, spreading death with whatever weapons were in their hands, killing without moderation or cessation.

At that moment the small body who were in front of the Sultan retreated, and swept by him rejoicing to be clear of the battle, but our people were involved in a heavy engagement. Our Sultan, al-Hajj Idrīs ibn 'Ali, Amir al-Mu'minin (the leader of the Muslims, the visitor to the two holy precincts,¹ the descendant of those of noble blood, on whom be the honour of God in both worlds and His blessing upon His offspring until all eternity by the grace of our Lord and master Muhammad the Elect and his descendants, upon whom be the mercy of God) did not budge from the place where he had stood from the first, but remained immovable like a deep-seated mountain, patient and resolute, trusting in God and leaning upon Him, invoking Him and turning humbly towards Him. He remained firm on his grey charger grasping with his blessed hand his drawn sword, naked and sharp. When his horse made a movement to regain his place on account of the retreat of all the people on both sides, he reined him back and made him face the enemy.

There he stood unshakable until the Lord his God gave him the spacious delight of complete victory according to what He had written on His Tablets. One of the most wonderful things brought about by Almighty God was His lavishing help and assistance upon the Sultan on this battle field by His grace and generosity and loving kindness. Truly He distinguishes him whom He will with what He will and in His hand are ease and pain. I heard and saw—not I alone, but also my learned friend the master of jurisprudence Hajj 'Umar, chief of Faya—as the proof of victory and a sign of truth, two mighty winds blowing from the west towards the east so that when they reached the

¹ Mecca and Medina.

interspace between our Sultan and the enemy, the latter turned and fled as one man in headlong retreat. Then our Sultan and his commanders and governors and bodyguards and chiefs followed as far as prudence dictated, hewing down the enemy with swords and spears, killing them and transfixing them until the sun sank down in the sky. The number of slain is unknown except to God Almighty and even had those of the mightiest intellect among mortal men put forth every endeavour to compute the number, it would have been entirely beyond their power....

IBN FARTUA · *Mai Idrīs Alooma: Diplomacy, Innovation, and Reform*¹

The Sultan was an accomplished diplomatist and was conversant with correct procedure and methods of negotiation. God most high had endowed him with knowledge. As has been said before in this book:—

‘There is no forbidding what God has given,
Nor can that be given which God has forbidden.’

This maxim Idrīs, with the wise political instinct with which, as we have noted, he was endowed, followed in sending an embassy with a note to the Sultan of the Bulala and his captains and his amirs and his chiefs. The ambassador was Fuski ibn Kilili of the tribe of Kayi.

The note ran as follows:—

‘If my note reaches you in safety, and you read it at leisure, know that my desire is that you should send to me an upright and sensible man to hear what I have to say about the true reason of our coming here, and return to you.’

Such was the tenor of our Sultan’s letter to the Bulala.

When it reached them, and they had read the contents in the presence of their people, they became very angry and positively

¹ All these three extracts are taken from the works of Ahmad ibn Fartua: the first from *The Kanem Wars* (see the foregoing extract), p. 22; and the second and third from his *History of the First Twelve Years of Mai Idrīs Alooma*, translated and edited by H. R. Palmer, Lagos, 1926, pp. 11–12 and 33–34. For the Bulala see above, p. 110.

refused to send anyone. They sent a letter written by Ḥajj ibn Dili, but sent no representative though they had plenty of sensible men to send to us even as we had sent to them.

The contents of their letter were to the effect that they could not understand our action, in that ‘you have burnt our houses on your way, and done evil in our land. You have done it and that is all.’

That is what they said. When we saw their letter we were utterly astonished, and saw that their action was that of men puffed up with pride, and that none would return answer like this save people confident in their power and strength over all. Had matters been as they thought and argued and supposed, we should have remained at home in our country. Alas, alas, the matter was not as they thought....

So he made the pilgrimage and visited Tāba¹ with delight, Tāba of the Prophet, the chosen one (upon whom be peace and the blessing of God), the unique, the victorious over the vicissitudes of day and night.

He was enriched by visiting the tomb of the pious Ṣahāba,² the chosen, the perfect ones (may the Lord be favourable and beneficent to them), and he bought in the noble city a house and date grove, and settled there some slaves, yearning after a plenteous reward from the Great Master.

Then he prepared to return to the kingdom of Bornu. When he reached the land called Barāk³ he killed all the inhabitants who were warriors. They were strong but after this became weak; they became conquered, where formerly they had been conquerors. Among the benefits which God (Most High) of His bounty and beneficence, generosity, and constancy conferred upon the Sultan was the acquisition of Turkish musketeers and numerous household slaves who became skilled in firing muskets.⁴

Hence the Sultan was able to kill the people of Amsaka⁵ with muskets, and there was no need for other weapons, so that God gave him a great victory by reason of his superiority in arms.

Among the most surprising of his acts was the stand he took

¹ *Taba*, Medina.

² *al-Ṣahāba*, the Companions of the Prophet.

³ Palmer identifies this with Wadi Barāk, on the Borku-Kanem road, between N'galaka and Mao, east of Chad (Ibn Fartua, *Idrīs Alooma*, p. 67).

⁴ Palmer supposes that these musketeers were brought to Bornu from Egypt, via the Kufra Oasis.

⁵ Amsaka, south of Lake Chad.

against obscenity and adultery, so that no such thing took place openly in his time. Formerly the people had been indifferent to such offences, committed openly or secretly by day or night. In fact he was a power among his people and from him came their strength.

So he wiped away the disgrace, and the face of the age was blank with astonishment. He cleared away and reformed as far as he could the known wrong-doing.

To God belong secret things, and in His hands is direction, and prevention, and prohibition, and sanction.

Owing to the Mai's noble precepts all the people had recourse to the sacred Shari'a,¹ putting aside wordly intrigue in their disputes and affairs, big or little.

From all we have heard, formerly most of the disputes were settled by the chiefs, not by the 'Ulamā'. . . .²

The Sultan was intent on the clear path laid down by the Qur'ān and Sunna³ and the words of the wise, in all his affairs and actions. He never went outside the sanctions of these three guides to conduct, or shunned or avoided their obligations. All his people knew that such was his character and no chronicler of his age would doubt it. As an indication of his excellent qualities, is the innovation he made in building a mosque of clay. Formerly the mosque was of thatch, but he planned and saw that there was a better and more correct form. He destroyed all the old mosques in the capital of Bornu, and built new ones of clay, knowing how to hasten in the cause of the Faith, as it is laid down in the Qur'ān and the Hadith. He sought nothing thereby but a heavenly reward, from the mighty Lord.

Again, he devised boats to help the Muslims and make it easy to cross the river in a short time and in comfort. In ancient days a boat was on the model of the hollowed-out drinking troughs, with which shepherds are wont to water their flocks and herds—a contrivance called in the Bornu language *Gagara*.

¹ *Shari'a*, literally the road to the watering place, the clear path to be followed, and thus the canon law of Islam, or rather the whole body of prescriptions regulating a Muslim's relations with God and with his fellow men.

² Plural of 'ālim, those who are learned in Muslim canon law and theology (Hausa, *Mallam*).

³ Literally, custom; hence 'the theory and practice of the catholic Muslim community' (*Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, pp. 52–53).

If a Sultan wanted to cross the river with his army, it took him two days to do so or three days, even though the ferry men and polers did their best to get them over with all speed. But when the age of our Sultan Ḥajj Idrīs came, he discarded these *Gagara* and made big boats, so that the people crossed the river rapidly and were carried in large numbers in one boat.

Thus the Sultan arranged and planned for the benefit of the camels and horses and baggage of his army so as to lighten the trouble of the march. Formerly most of the transport of the army was droves of oxen and ponies and mules and donkeys. No one then had many camels. Hence travelling in the waterless places was difficult for them.

But the Sultan Ḥajj Idrīs ordered his amirs and captains and chiefs and all who were able to buy camels, to make easy travelling in his reign, since it was trying and difficult as has been related.

So ingenious, clever, masterful and able was he. Had it not been for these arrangements, the march to Agram and the country of Dirkū had not been easy for the amirs. In many other ways his ability was wonderful. We have mentioned a very little, passing over much in the fear of being lengthy and verbose. But the sensible reader will understand that beyond the stream there is a big sea.

W E L S H · *Benin: Food, Drink, and Friendship*¹

The commodities that we carried in this voyage were cloth both linnen and wollen, yron worke of sundry sorts, Manillios or bracelets of copper, glasse beades, and corall.

The commodities that we brought home were pepper and Elephants teeth, oyle of palme, cloth made of Cotton wooll very curiously woven, and cloth made of the barke of palme

¹ From *A voyage to Benin beyond the countrey of Guinea made by Master James Welsh, who set foorth in the yeere 1588*, in Hakluyt's *Voyages*, vol. vi, pp. 456-8 (Everyman Edition, iv, p. 297). Chief Egharevba (*A Short History of Benin*, p. 33) says that James Welsh, John Bird, Newton, and other Englishmen visited Benin during the reign of the Oba Ehanga'buda, who was 'a noted magician. . . . Tradition says that he possessed a certain glass through which he could see many things which were invisible to the human eye. In reality this was a telescope presented to the Oba by his European friend, James Welsh, in 1590.'

trees. Their money is pretie white shels, for golde and silver we saw none. They have also great store of cotton growing: their bread is a kind of roots, they call it Inamia [yam], and when it is well sodden I would leave our bread to eat of it, it is pleasant in eating, and light of digestion, the roote thereof is as bigge as a mans arme. Our men upon fish-dayes had rather eate the rootes with oyle and vineger, then to eate good stockfish. There are great store of palme trees, out of the which they gather great store of wine, which wine is white and very pleasant, and we should buy two gallons of it for 20 shels. They have good store of sope, and it smelleth like beaten violets. Also many pretie fine mats and baskets that they make, and spoones of Elephants teeth very curiously wrought with divers proportions of foules and beasts made upon them. There is upon the coast wonderfull great lightning and thunder, in so much as I never hard the like in no Countrey, for it would make the decke or hatches tremble under our feete, and before we were well acquainted with it, we were fearefull, but God be thanked we had no harme. The people are very gentle and loving, and they goe naked both men and women untill they be married, and then they goe covered from the middle downe to the knees. They would bring our men earthen pottes of the quantitie of two gallons, full of hony and hony combes for 100 shelles. They would also bring great store of Oranges and Plantans which is a fruit that groweth upon a tree, and is very like unto a Cucumber but very pleasant in eating. It hath pleased God of his merceifull goodnessse to give me the knowledge how to preserve fresh water with little cost, which did serve us sixe moneths at the sea, and when we came into Plimmouth it was much wondered at, of the principal men of the towne, who said that there was not sweeter water in any spring in Plimmouth. Thus doth God provide for his creatures, unto whom be praise now and for evermore, Amen.

SECTION FIVE

The Seventeenth Century

BARTH · *The Rise of Katsena*¹

The town [Katsena], probably, did not receive the name of the province till it had become large and predominant; which event, if Leo be correct, we must conclude did not happen much before the middle of the 16th century of our era, while in early times some separate villages probably occupied the site where, at a later period, the immense town spread out. The oldest of these villages is said to have been Ambutey or Mbutey, where we must presume Komayo² and his successors to have resided. After Gogo [Gao] had been conquered by Mulay Hamed,³ the emperor of Morocco, and, from a large and industrious capital, had become a provincial town, great part of the commerce which formerly centred there must have been transferred to Katsena, although this latter place seems never to have had any considerable trade in gold, which formed the staple of the market of Gogo. Thus the town went on increasing to that enormous size, the vestiges of which still exist at the present time, although the quarter actually inhabited comprises but a small part of its extent.

The town, if only half its immense area were ever tolerably well inhabited, must certainly have had a population of at least a hundred thousand souls; for its circuit is between

¹ From Henry Barth, *Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa, 1849-1855* (London, 1857), ii, pp. 77-80. For Henry Barth (1821-65), see Introduction, pp. 15-16.

² The legendary founder of the original ruling dynasty of Katsina; see Sect. I, p. 56. Supplanted, possibly some time in the thirteenth century, by Korau, founder of the dynasty which continued, effectively, until the Fulani conquest. (Urvoy, *Populations du Soudan Central*, pp. 232-4).

³ i.e. Mulai Ahmad al-Mansür, who reigned from 1578 to 1593. See Introduction, pp. 30-31, and Bovill, *The Golden Trade of the Moors*, chs. 13 to 17.

thirteen and fourteen English miles. At present, when the inhabited quarter is reduced to the north-western part, and when even this is mostly deserted, there are scarcely seven or eight thousand people living in it. In former times it was the residence of a prince, who, though he seems never to have attained to any remarkable degree of power, and was indeed almost always in some degree dependent on, or a vassal of, the king of Bornu, nevertheless was one of the most wealthy and conspicuous rulers of Negroland. Every prince at his accession to the throne had to forward a sort of tribute or present to Birni Ghasreggomo [N'gazargamu], the capital of the Bornu empire, consisting of one hundred slaves, as a token of his obedience; but this being done, it does not appear that his sovereign rights were in any way interfered with. In fact, Katsena, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries of our era, seems to have been the chief city of this part of Negroland, as well in commercial and political importance as in other respects; for here that state of civilization which had been called forth by contact with the Arabs seems to have reached its highest degree, and as the Hausa language here attained the greatest richness of form and the most refined pronunciation, so also the manners of Katsena were distinguished by superior politeness from those of the other towns of Hausa.

‘D. R.’ · *The Dutch in Benin¹*

The Cite of Benin

The towne seemeth to be very great, when you enter into it, you goe into a great broad street, not paved, which seemeth to be seven or eight times broader than the Warmoes street in Amsterdam; which goeth right out, and never crooketh, and where I was lodged with Mattheus Cornelison, it was at least a quarter of an houres going from the gate, and yet I could not

¹ From *A description and historical declaration of the Golden Kingdom of Guinea, . . . all perfectly viewed and curiously discovered, and written by one that hath oftentimes beeene there. Translated out of Dutch, by G. Artus Dantisc., and the sixth part of De Bry, his Ind. Orient, conferred also with the Latine Edition, and contracted. In Samuel Purchas, Haklyuytus Posthumus, or Purchas His Pilgrims, Glasgow, 1905, vi, pp. 354–9.* ‘D.R.’, the author of this account—included by Pieter de Marees in his *Beschryvinge . . . van Gunea* (Amsterdam, 1602), and abridged by Purchas—may have been Dierick Ruiters.

see to the end of the street, but I saw a great high tree, as farre as I could discerne, and I was told the street was as much longer. Then I spake with a Netherlander, who told me he had been as farre as that tree, but saw no end of the street; . . . so that it is thought that that street is a mile long [*these are Dutch miles¹*] besides the Suburbs. At the gate where I entered on horsebacke, I saw a very high Bulwarke, very thick of earth, with a very deepe broade ditch, but it was drie, and full of high trees. . . . That Gate is a reasonable good Gate, made of wood after their manner, which is to be shut, and there always there is watch holden. Without this Gate, there is a great suburbe: when you are in the great Street aforesaid, you see many great streets on the sides thereof, which also goe right forth, but you cannot see to the end of them, by reason of their great length, a man might write more of the situation of this Towne, if he might see it, as you may the Townes in Holland, which is not permitted there, by one that alwaies goes with you, some men say, that he goeth with you, because you should have no harme done unto you, but yet you must goe no farther than he will let you.

Their Houses

The Houses in this Towne stand in good order, one close and even with the other, as the Houses in Holland stand, such Houses as Men of qualitie (which are Gentlemen) or others dwell in, have two or three steps to go up, and before, there is, as it were, a gallerie, where a man may sit drie; which Gallerie every morning is made cleane by their Slaves, and in it there is a Mat spred for men to sit on, their Roomes within are four-square, over them having a Roofe that is not close in the middle, at the which place, the raine, wind, and light commeth in, and therein they lie and eate their meate; but they have other places besides, as Kitchens and other roomes. . . .

The Court

The King's Court is very great, within it having many great four-square Plaines, which round about them have Galleries, wherein there is alwaies watch kept; I was so far within the

¹ A Dutch mile was equal to about four English miles.

Court, that I passed over four such great Plaines, and where-soever I looked, still I saw Gates upon Gates, to goe into other places, and in that sort I went as far as any Netherlander was, which was to the Stable where his best Horses stood, alwaies passing a great long way; it seemeth that the King hath many souldiers, he also hath many Gentlemen, who when they come to the Court ride upon Horses, and sit upon their Horses as the women in our Countrie doe, on each side having one man, on whom they hold fast; and the greater their estate is, the more men they have going after them. Some of their men have great Shields, wherewith they keepe the Gentlemen from the Sunne; they goe next to him, except those on whom hee leaneth, the rest come after him, playing some on Drums, others upon Hornes and Fluits, some have a hollow Iron whereon they strike, and so they ride playing to the Court. . . . There are also many men Slaves seen in the Towne, that carrie Water, Iniamus [yams], and Palme-wine, which they say is for the King; and many carrie Grasse, which is for their Horses; and all this is carried to the Court. The King oftentimes sendeth out Presents of Spices, which are carried orderly through the streets, and . . . they that carrie them goe one after the other, and by them there goeth one or two with white Rods, so that every man must step aside and give them place, although hee were a Gentleman.

Sixe hundred Wives. Gentlemen their making

The King hath many Wives, and every yeere goes twice out of his Court and visiteth the Towne, at which time he sheweth all his Power and Magnificence, and all the Braverie he can, then he is convoyed and accompanied by all his Wives, which are above sixe hundred in number, but they are not all his wedded Wives. The Gentlemen also have many Wives, as some have eightie, some ninetie and more, and there is not the meanest Man among them but hath ten or twelve Wives at the least, whereby in that place you find more Women than Men.

They also have severall places in the Towne, where they keepe their Markets; in one place they have their great Market Day, called Dia de Ferro; and in another place they hold their little Market, called Ferro. . . . They . . . bring great store of Ironworke to sell there, and Instruments to fish withall, others to plow and to till the land withall; and many Weapons, as

Assagaies, and Knives also for the Warre. This Market and Traffique is there very orderly holden. . . .

Warres

. . . The King hath many souldiers which are subject to him, and they have a Generall to command over them, as if he were their Captaine: This Captaine hath some souldiers under him, and goes always in the middle of them, and they goe round about him, singing and leaping, and making great noise, and joy. Those Captaines are very proud of their Office, and are very stately, and goe exceedingly proudly about in the streets. Their Swords are broad, which hang about their necke in a leather Girdle which reacheth under their armes. . . .

Wrong to a stranger

They are very consonable, and will doe no wrong one to the other, neither will take anything from strangers, for if they doe, they should afterward be put to death, for they lightly judge a man to die for doing any wrong to a stranger. . . .

They respect strangers very much, for when any man meeteth them, they will shun the way for him and step aside, and dare not be so bold to goe by, unlesse they be expressly bidden by the partie, and prayed to go forward, and although they were never so sore laden, yet they durst not do it; for, if they did, they should be punished for it: They are also very covetous of honour, and willingly desire to be praised and rewarded for any friendship they doe. . . .

D A P P E R · *Benin at the Height of its Power*¹

Boundaries: Cotton

The Kingdom bears the name of its capital. . . . It is not known how far this kingdom extends towards the North, for there are

¹ From Olfert Dapper, *Description de l'Afrique*, Amsterdam, 1686, pp. 308–13. (The first, Dutch, edition—which differs substantially from the French—was published at Amsterdam in 1668.) Dapper was one of the most thorough of the Dutch seventeenth-century geographers, from whom many later writers borrowed—at least as regards his West African material. Dapper, who did not himself visit Africa, says in his preface that he obtained much of his information from the writings of Samuel Blomert, handed him by the historian Isaac Vossius. Blomert's account,

places separated by the impenetrable woods; but it is known that from West to East it is 150 leagues long. There are also many towns and an infinity of villages, whose names are unknown, between the town of Benin and the Kingdom of Ulcami [Oyo], and along the river which bears the same name as the country. . . . In the country one sees nothing but bushes, and a few paths which are so narrow that it is difficult for two people to walk abreast. About thirty leagues higher up near the source of the Benin is the village of Gotton[Gwato]. . . .

Benin

Fourteen or fifteen leagues from Gotton, as one travels North, lies a town which the Dutch call Great Benin, because in fact there is no town so great in all those regions. The palace of the Queen alone is three leagues round, and the town five; so that the town and the palace taken together have a perimeter of eight leagues. The town is enclosed on one side by a wall ten feet high, made of a double palisade of trees, with stakes in between interlaced in the form of a cross, thickly lined with earth. On the other side a marsh, fringed with bushes, which stretches from one end of the wall to the other, serves as a natural rampart to the town. There are several gates, eight or nine feet high and five feet wide: they are made of wood, all of one piece, and turn on a stake like the hurdles which enclose meadows.

The King's Palace

The King's palace is on the right side of the town, as you leave by the gate of Gotton. It is a collection of buildings which occupy as much space as the town of Harlem, and which is enclosed with walls. There are numerous apartments for the Prince's ministers and fine galleries most of which are as big as those on the Exchange at Amsterdam. They are supported by wooden pillars encased with copper, where their victories are depicted, and which are carefully kept very clean. The majority of these royal houses are covered with branches of palm-trees, arranged like square planks; each corner is adorned

Dapper says, was very full, containing much information not previously recorded. He adds that Blomert lived several years in Africa. Who this Samuel Blomert was is not clear, though Marquart attempts an identification, *Benin-Sammlung*, Leiden, 1913, p. ix (see also Ling Roth, *Great Benin*, p. 2).

with a small pyramidal tower, on the point of which is perched a copper bird spreading its wings.

The town is composed of thirty main streets, very straight and 120 feet wide, apart from an infinity of small intersecting streets. The houses are close to one another, arranged in good order; they have roofs, verandahs and balustrades, and are covered with leaves of palm-trees and bananas—for they are only one storey high. None the less in the houses of gentlemen there are long galleries within and many rooms whose walls and floors are of red earth. These people are in no way inferior to the Dutch as regards cleanliness; they wash and scrub their houses so well that they are polished and shining like a looking-glass. . . .

The Country

The country of Benin is low-lying, covered with woods, and broken up into several regions by rivers and lagoons; but there is a shortage of water in some parts, as on the road from Gotton to Great Benin. The King pays people to furnish travellers with water; and his officers are careful to keep at different places large pots full of water, quite fresh and clear as crystal, with a shell for drinking. But nobody would dare to take a drop without paying, and, if the official is not there, one leaves the money on the spot and continues on one's way. . . .

In these rivers one finds crocodiles, hippotamuses, and many kinds of excellent fish. . . . The land is as well stocked with beasts, both wild and tame, as the water with monsters and fish. There are elephants, tigers, leopards, deer, wild bears, monkeys, civets, wild cats, horses, asses, hares, goats, sheep with hair instead of wool; all kind of reptiles, snails, toads, snakes; and various species of birds, parrots, pigeons, doves, partridges, swans, and ostriches—or at least animals very like ostriches.

Plants

Plants flourish equally well there. The road from Gotton to Benin is fringed all along with orange and lemon trees. Pepper grows there, though not so plentifully as in the Indies, and its seeds are smaller. It is a country of cotton; the cotton-trees are very productive, and the inhabitants use it for making clothes. . . .

Inhabitants

These Negroes are much more civilized than others on this coast. They are people who have good laws and a well organized police; who live on good terms with the Dutch and other foreigners who come to trade among them, and show them a thousand marks of friendship. Thieving and drunkenness are not their principal faults, but rather lechery; yet the men are better built than the women.

Clothing

They dress themselves in very much the same way as the inhabitants of Arder,¹ except that those who are of the common people wear only one of these great waistbands. The women wear a skirt which comes down as far as their calves; they have their hair curled round their heads like garlands, one half coloured black and the other red, and copper bracelets on their arms.

Nudity

Nobody at the court dare clothe himself until the King gives him a garment, nor let his hair grow until the Prince has made him this present. Sometimes, instead of a garment, the King gives the young men a woman slave, and in this way they obtain permission to clothe themselves and to cherish their hair. In the same way no girl would dare to wear a dress until the man who marries her gives her one. Thus one sees people of both sexes, between 20 and 25 years of age, going about the streets quite naked, without feeling any shame. Men can marry as many wives as they like, and keep concubines also; but nothing of this kind is possible for white foreigners, since Negro women are forbidden to sleep with them on pain of death.

Unhappy fate of women

When a woman has a son, and her husband dies, she becomes the slave of her child, and cannot marry again without his consent. So that if any one wants to possess the mother, he has to make his request to the son, and, in order to obtain his consent,

¹ Ardra or Great Ardra (Allada), the state from which Dahomey was founded early in the seventeenth century, and which was conquered and annexed by Dahomey in 1724 (Claude Tardits, *Porto-Novo*, Paris, 1958, pp. 24–26).

to give him a young girl in her place. Usually the son, preserving some kind of respect for his mother, insists that the man to whom he hands her over must not sell her without the King's permission. As for girls, as soon as they have reached the age of 13 or 14, they are no longer under the control of their fathers.

Regetaires

When a man dies, all the women who belong to him and with whom he has had sexual relations are put at the disposition of the King; but those with whom he has never had intercourse have to be divided among the male children whom he leaves, who keep them for themselves or remarry them to others. Among the women who depend upon the King, the prince often makes the prettiest into *Regetaires*. These are courtesans who are obliged to give him a share of their profits. If by chance one of these *Regetaires* becomes pregnant and bears a son, she is released from such payments; if she has a daughter, the King takes her under his protection and, in due time and place, provides her with accommodation. These *Regetaires* form a kind of Republic apart; they have their officials and collectors, who come directly within the jurisdiction of the great Fiadors or State Councillors. Many people are surprised to see no twins in this country. The reason is that a woman becomes dishonoured, at Benin just as at Arder, when she is delivered of two children at one birth; it seems very likely that the midwives make no difficulties over committing homicide as an act of friendship.

Funerals

Human sacrifice is also permissible, and the death of people of quality usually involves the deaths of a large number of their slaves. It is said that there was one woman who, on her death-bed, gave orders that the seventy-eight slaves which she possessed should be sacrificed, and that, to make the number eighty, she wanted a child and a girl added. The dead are buried with their clothes; the seven days which follow the burial are days of feasting and rejoicing, during which there is dancing to the music of drums and other instruments around the tomb. Often they open the sepulchre to make new offerings of men and beasts to the corpses. After the death of a woman, her relatives

come and take the pots and pans, the boxes and all the furniture that they find in her house, and, carrying them on their heads through the streets, they sing praises of the dead woman, accompanying them on instruments. The husband remains master of everything, and the children only inherit from their mother what she gave them during her lifetime. . . .

Commerce

Commerce and military service are distinct functions, and no one has the right to trade nor to buy anything from Europeans except the Fiadors and the merchants whom the King has appointed for that duty. A soldier could not enter the Christians' warehouses without great risk. As soon as a ship has anchored on this coast, the King is informed, and he summons two or three Fiadors and twenty or thirty merchants to whom he gives authority to go and do business with the Whites. These agents travel post-haste to Gotton, where the Dutch have a warehouse, commandeering on their way as many canoes and oarsmen as they require; and when the owners complain, these expropriators ask them insolently if they are not the King's subjects, and if they do not wish their property to be used in his service. When they arrive at Gotton, they note the finest and most commodious houses, and take their merchandise there, without asking the house-owner's leave. Often the inhabitants of Gotton have to turn out of their homes to make room for these newcomers, and have, on the day of their arrival, to prepare meat dishes for them, without demanding anything for their pains.

The first interview between the Fiadors and the Dutch is only a courtesy visit; the former arrive magnificently dressed, wearing necklaces of jasper or fine coral, to find the latter in their warehouses; to greet them on behalf of their King; to ask them news of Europe and of their country; and to offer them various fruits which the Prince sends them. The Dutch reply to these compliments with others, and the only interruption is for drinking. The next day the Fiadors return and ask to see the goods; if these are articles which have been imported on previous occasions, they take them at the rate at which they were formerly sold. But if these are anything new, they bargain as hard as they can, sometimes for whole months.

The goods which the Dutch bring are:—cloth of gold and silver; red and scarlet cloth; drinking vessels with red stripes round the mouth; all kinds of fine cotton; linen; candied oranges, lemons, and other green fruit; red velvet; brass bracelets weighing $5\frac{1}{2}$ ounces; lavender; violet embroidery silk; coarse flannel; fine coral; Harlem fabrics, starched and flowered; red glass earrings; gilded mirrors; iron bars; crystal beads; *boesjes* or Indian cowries which serve as local currency.

The goods which the Dutch take in exchange are:—striped cotton garments which are retailed on the Gold Coast, and blue cloths which are sold on the rivers of Gabon and Angola; jasper stones; female slaves, for they refuse to sell men; leopard skins; pepper; and *Acori*, which is a kind of blue coral that grows in water, on a stony bottom, in the form of a tree. The garments that are made in Benin are of cotton thread, composed of four strips, and are $2\frac{1}{2}$ or $2\frac{3}{4}$ ells long, by two short ells wide; there is also a smaller variety that has only three bands. Every four days a market is held at Gotton, where edible provisions and clothes are brought for sale from Arbon, from Benin, and even from Cocco, which is a day's journey east from Benin. There are several large plains between Benin and Gotton, which serve as a market and a meeting-place for the peasants of the neighbourhood, to furnish them with what they need. When some dispute arises between them, it is the nobility of the country that judge it.

Arms

The arms of these people consist of pikes and shields, assegais, bows, and poisoned arrows. Gentlemen who are on their way to take part in a campaign, and who want to display themselves, wear a fine scarlet coat, a necklace of elephants' and leopards' teeth, and a red furred turban trimmed with leopard or civet skin, from which hangs a horse's tail. The soldiers go naked from the waist up, and on the rest of their body wear a garment of stuff as fine as silk. The army is led by a general who is called *Ouwe-Asserri*, who commands despotically and enjoys all the booty, permitting no one to keep anything, unless it is on the sly and at great risk to himself. However, these soldiers are very courageous and very valiant; they never leave their posts, even when they have death before their eyes; and after the battle go

and thank the Prince for the honour which he has done them by employing them in his service. The arrows which remain unshot are brought back to the King's arsenal, and the fetish-priests poison new ones to replace those which have been lost.

He is a powerful Prince, the King of Benin: he can mobilise 20,000 soldiers in a day, and raise in a short time an army of 80,000 to 100,000 men. Thus he is the terror of his neighbours, and an object of fear to his own peoples. The Kings of Istanna, Jaboe, Isago, and Oedobo, are his vassals; and all his subjects, however great they may be, are simply in the position of slaves. They even bear a brand on their bodies, as a mark of slavery, which the King stamps upon them during their childhood, when their father or mother brings them into the royal presence.

Government

The three great Fiadors are the three chief Ministers of State,¹ after the Commander-in-chief, each of whom governs a quarter of the town of Benin. Other towns have also their Fiadors: Gotton, for example, has five and Arbon seven. These latter judge civil cases; but, as for criminal cases, these are all referred to the capital, and come within the jurisdiction of the Great Fiadors, who often condemn a man who has too few cowries to offer them.

The King of Benin maintains a large number of wives, often more than a thousand. When he dies, the wives whom he has enjoyed are shut up in a seraglio, where each has her separate room, and where they are guarded by eunuchs; his successor inherits those whom he has not enjoyed.

Royal Ceremonial

This Prince makes a public appearance once every year, on horseback, covered with royal ornaments, with a train of three of four hundred gentlemen, consisting of infantry and cavalry, and a troop of musicians—of whom the former lead the way, and the latter follow. The cavalcade parades around the palace, without ever moving far from it. Several tame leopards are also led in the procession, and a good number of dwarfs and deaf-mutes, who provide entertainment for the King. To complete the solemnity of the occasion ten, twelve, or fifteen slaves are

¹ See R. E. Bradbury, *The Benin Kingdom*, pp. 35–44, and below, Sect. VI, pp. 150–1.

strangled, in the belief that these unhappy victims are going to another country, where they return to life, and where their condition is improved; and that, when their masters arrive there, each one will recover his slaves. There is also another day when everyone who comes is shown the royal treasure, which consists of jaspers set in coral and other rareties. This is the day when the King makes his public appointments, and when he distributes his rewards, which consist, as a rule, of slaves and women. . . .

DAPPER · *Don Antonio Domingo, King of Warri*¹

. . . The Town of Ouwerre [Warri], where the King holds his court, is forty leagues from the sea, on the banks of the Rio Forcado [Forcados], which washes it on one side, and on the other is shaded by forests. The houses are very much like those of Benin: the houses of the nobility are fine enough, and roofed with palm leaves, but while at Benin the house walls are of red earth, here they are of grey earth. The palace of the King of Ouwerre is built on a model very similar to the palace of Benin, but it is much smaller and the town is not more than 7,500 paces in circumference. . . .

Soil

The soil is thin and dry, and only produces plants which like heat and dryness, like coconuts, sweet and bitter oranges, pepper—but not much, on account of the neglect of the inhabitants who fail to cultivate it—bananas in abundance, and a grain called *Mandihoa* [manioc], which is ground into flour and from which bread is made.

The lack of pasturage means that there is no stock raising. The only domestic animals to be found are hens. Fishing is good and sometimes sea-cows, which have a good flavour, are caught.

¹ From O. Dapper, *Description de l'Afrique*, pp. 314–15 (see the foregoing extract). For further information about Don Antonio Domingo, the question of his identification with Oyenakpara in Itsekiri legends, and evidence regarding his father Don Domingos' residence in Portugal from 1600 to 1610, see P. C. Lloyd and A. F. C. Ryder, 'Don Domingos, Prince of Warri' (in *Odu*, Ibadan, No. 4, 1957).

Inhabitants

The inhabitants of the country are well built for Negroes, and have in many respects even more spirit than those of Benin. They may wear cotton and silk garments without having to ask the King's permission—as is the case at Benin—which they wind round above the navel, like infants' swaddling clothes. All the Negroes, both men and women, are marked with three incisions, one on the forehead and two others on the temples. They wear their hair long or short, just as it pleases them; there is no rule in this matter except their fancy—nor is there as regards the number of wives. Widows belong to the King, who presents them to whoever he pleases. . . .

Government

The King of Ouwerre is the ally and in some manner the vassal of the King of Benin, but in other respects is entirely absolute in his dominions. He has three state councillors, each of whom has his own department, and who compose the final court of justice. The King who reigned in the year 1644 was a Mulatto, of Portuguese origin, by name Don Antonio de Mingo. His father had been in Portugal, and had brought back a wife from there, by whom he had had this son. So this Prince showed many marks of his birth, going about dressed in the Portuguese fashion, and wearing a sword at his side, as other Mulattos do.

Religion

In the matter of religion, these Negroes practice almost the same ceremonies as in Benin—except that they are more reasonable, that they have a horror of demons, and that one never hears tell of poisoning among them: so much so that it would be easy enough to convert them to the Christian faith. The King himself and most of the inhabitants have some leaning towards the Roman Religion. There is a church in Ouwerre, with an altar on which is a crucifix, two candlesticks, and images of the Virgin and the Apostles. Negroes come there, carrying rosaries, and praying to God in the Portuguese style. There are some who can read and write and who assiduously try to obtain Portuguese books.

DAN MARINA · Mai 'Ali of Bornu Defeats the Jukun¹

'Ali has triumphed over the heathen, a matchless triumph in the path of God.

Has he not brought us succour? Verily, but for him
 Our hearts had never ceased from dread of the unbelievers.
 Narrow had become to us the earth pressed by the foe,
 Till 'Ali saved our children and their children yet unborn.

He drove back to their furthest borders the army of the Jukun,
 And God scattered their host disheartened.
 I heard that 'Ali, the Amir al-Mu'minīn,²
 Went to the land of the heathen and there lay in wait for them.

Lewufaru worked iniquity in the Sudan, in his overweening
 pride,
 Stalking forth with the stride of a tyrant, and
 Setting his promises at nought.

He and his people spared not rivers nor cities;
 The Kwararafa followed the track of his doom,
 And their hour too
 Passed to the grasping palm of the fortunate Prince,
 The pious Hajj to the holy cities.

Give thanks again for what our Mai 'Ali has wrought;
 For he has ransomed the whole Sudan from strife.

¹ A poem by Dan Marina (in Arabic Ibn al-Sabbāgh), a Mallam resident at Katsina in the seventeenth century, translated by H. R. Palmer and published in 'History of Katsina' (*Journal of the African Society*, XXVI, April 1927, pp. 226-7); reproduced in the shortened version quoted here by C. K. Meek, in *A Sudanese Kingdom*, London, 1931, p. 27. The poem apparently celebrates a victory of Mai 'Ali ibn al-Hajj 'Umar of Bornu over the Kwararafa [Kororofa], or Jukun, in about the year 1670, after he had returned from his third pilgrimage to Mecca. During Mai 'Ali's reign, from about 1657 to 1694 (Urvoy's dating, *Histoire de l'empire du Bornou*, p. 85), Bornu was attacked at the same time by the Tuareg from the north and the Jukun (formerly subject to Bornu) from the south: Mai 'Ali 'managed to set the latter against the former and then destroyed them also' (Barth, *Travels and Discoveries*, ii, p. 659).

² Commander of the Faithful.

KANURI SONGS · Song to the Kaigama¹

Kaigama Anterashi,
He is the Star of the morning. . . .

Holder of the principal of the Sultan's offices:
Less than the Sultan, certainly, but greater than all the pros-
perous men:

If the chief slave wages war, he does not do so in vain.
If he does not engage in war, his idleness is not useless:
Chief slave, if I say to you 'Slave',
I mean the slave of the Sultan:
Chief slave, if I say to you 'Bushcow',
You are a man with the heart of a bush-cow among men:
Chief slave, if I say your town is Ngumfane, I mean that you are
the forehead of all the slaves:

Chief slave, patience is your attribute:
Your patience like that of a dromedary:
Chief slave, in your hand is a large-headed spear:
Chief slave, you practise witch-craft but its source is in the
palm of your hand:
Chief slave, my master, war is your hobby:
Your play, play with a shining spear:

You owner of the town of Zarara, your attributes those of a
Sultan:

You and a Sultan do not eat from one calabash,
Neither do you eat what a Sultan leaves:
Sun of greatness, seat of power:
Embers of the Sultan's assembly:
If the Sultan counts as ten large whole Kola-nuts,
The Kaigama counts as twenty halves:
If he and the Sultan are sitting together and their horses are
fighting:
He will not catch the Sultan's horse:

¹ This is an extract from 'The Song to Kaigama Anterashi, son of Lima', from J. R. Patterson's *Kanuri Songs* (cf. Sect. II, p. 70), pp. 14–16, originally composed during the reign of Mai 'Ali ibn al-Hajj 'Umar, i.e. in the latter part of the seventeenth century (see foregoing extract). Patterson adds that 'the Kaigama, who was the chief slave of the Sultan, held the rank of Commander-in-Chief in the Bornu Army. He was Warden of the southern section of the Empire as the Galadima, Mestrema, and Yerima were respectively of the western, eastern, and northern sectors.'

Nor will the Sultan catch his:
 Some other man will catch them:
 These are the privileges of a chief slave.
 You are the father of all the minor chiefs:
 And the elder brother of all the great chiefs:
 Chief slave, owner of the town of Ala and of Alari:
 Who lives between the Rivers Shari and Sharwa:
 Chief slave, Commander of Bornu's army:
 Should the Sultan come out of an old woman's dilapidated hut
 even,
 After him will come the holder of the office of Kaigama. . . .

sĀLIH · ‘Umar ibn ‘Uthmān at N’gazargamu¹

This is an account of what happened between ‘Umar ibn ‘Uthmān and the Amir ‘Ali ibn al-Hajj, the lord of N’gazargamu, and of the installation of the former as Imam Masbarma, Imam of the people of the royal house, and as one of the courtiers of the Amir ‘Ali.² As regards the marvellous story of ‘Umar ibn ‘Uthmān, who was a Fellata [Fulani] by race, and a native of the town of Garambal—‘Umar was a reader of the Qur’ān and gained a thorough knowledge of it. He read deeply in the science of *Tawhīd*,³ in the principles of Islamic ritual, as also mysticism, the Arabic language, syntax, rhetoric, logic, the secret arts, and law. The people of the country heard of his learning, so that when he visited them the people flocked to meet him, and were delighted to read and ask him questions so as to dispel their problems and doubts and disputes.

‘Umar ibn ‘Uthmān lived in the country of Bornu for about fifteen years. He afterwards journeyed east to the mosque of al-Azhar and stayed there to learn and instruct the people. Thence he went to Mecca and duly performed the pilgrimage.

¹ From H. R. Palmer, ‘Two Sudanese Manuscripts of the Seventeenth Century’ (*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, v. 3, 1929, pp. 545–7). Palmer gives the name of the author of this manuscript as Muḥammad Sāliḥ, son of Mal-lam Isharku, and the date of its composition as 1658.

² Amir ‘Ali is the Mai ‘Ali ibn al-Hajj ‘Umar of Bornu referred to in the two preceding extracts. N’gazargamu, near modern Geidam, was at this date the capital of the Bornu Kingdom. According to Palmer ‘Masbarma’ was the title given to the hereditary Wazirs of Bornu.

³ *Tawhīd*, the doctrine of divine unity, i.e. Theology.

He went on to Medina and visited the tomb of the Prophet, remaining at Medina for two months. From Medina he went to Baghdad, where he remained six months and enriched his own store of learning while enriching the learning of others. He performed the obligations of religion, while learning the art of living a cultivated life, and engaged in the science of analogical deduction, and study of the *Hadīth* [Traditions] of the Prophet. Finally he returned to N'gazargamu and lodged with Zarma Muhammad Margimi. . . .

. . . At that time the King wanted a thousand slaves, and was trying to get them. He said to Gumsu:¹ 'Where is this Mallam and where does he live?' She replied: 'In Zarma Margimi's quarter.' So the Amir sent a messenger at once without pause to see about the Mallam. 'Umar ibn 'Uthmān came to the Amir. The Amir begged him to intercede with God for him, and said to him: 'Ask God for me. I am looking for a thousand slaves.' So 'Umar prayed God for the Amir. Barely had he done so when the mother of the Amir died at this very juncture and left ten thousand slaves. The Amir inherited the ten thousand slaves and was overjoyed at getting that of which he was in need, and thus realised that 'Umar ibn 'Uthmān was potent in knowledge and piety and patience, in the effectiveness of his prayers, in quick perception of all that was *harām*,² and in full possession of his seven senses; to wit, his two eyes, his two ears, his two legs, his two hands, his manhood, his tongue, and his belly. He also perceived in 'Umar another manly virtue, namely abstention from bickering and slander. The Amir called 'Umar ibn 'Uthmān and concerned himself with him. He appointed him his Imam with the title Sabiramma, and made him Imam of the mosque of the people of his house, in order that they might pray behind him. The people who prayed in this mosque were seventy-six souls. There were seven ladies of the Amir's household and sixty men. . . . In N'gazargamu there were four Friday mosques. Each of these mosques had an Imam for Friday who led the Friday prayer with the people. At each mosque there were twelve thousand worshippers. . . .

¹ *Gumsu* (or *Gumsa*) was the title of the Mai's senior wife.

² Cf. p. 69, n. 1.

ÇELEBİ · *Bornu and Hausaland: A Turkish View*¹

The Country of Mai Bornu

The King is a most orthodox Sunnite of the Hanbali school.² His subjects likewise are both faithful and monotheistic. The people give their rulers the title of Mai, for example, Mai Sanjal, Mai 'Abbās and Mai Ṣadīq, 'Mai' being the equivalent of sultan.

They have no coinage of their own. In place of currency they import blue beads from Egypt and they accept axes. Their chiefs and women bind strings of beads about their heads as adornment instead of pearls. Every year they come to Egypt after crossing the desert, which takes them six months, bringing with them gold axes captured in war.³ In fact, when their ruler, Mai Sanjal al-Din,⁴ came to Egypt in order to perform the pilgrimage, accompanied by 1,000 camels, I was privileged to meet him. The ruler covered his face and eyes like a woman in front of strangers; bowing his face he lay on the ground and thus conducted the conversation. He died at 'Aqaba while returning from the pilgrimage.

The Country of the Hausa⁵ People

There are seven tribes of Hausa,⁶ one of which is Muslim, a swarthy people who possess no coinage of their own but who observe the Friday sermon. The other tribes live in ignorance of

¹ From Evliyā Çelebī, *Seyâhatnâme*, Istanbul, 1938, book x, p. 72. Evliyā Çelebī ibn Derwîsh (c. 1611–80), the Turkish traveller, known as *seyyâh-i Âlam*, 'the globe-trotter', was in Egypt between 1672 and 1680, and it was presumably here that he gathered his information on Bornu and Hausaland. For further information regarding his life and works, see the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ii, pp. 33–34. This extract is included, not because it is a reliable source, but to illustrate the contact existing at this time between Bornu and the Hausa States and the Ottoman Empire.

² The most rigorous of the four orthodox schools of Muslim Law, founded by Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Hanbal of Baghdad (A.D. 780–855). Çelebī is almost certainly in error here. All other evidence indicates that the dominant school of Law in Bornu was consistently Maliki. See Sect. II, p. 77.

³ Doubtful. This might conceivably mean gold smelted in the form of flattened mushrooms for use as currency. Maqrizi (Sect. II, p. 77) speaks of pieces of gold as having exchange value.

⁴ The Mai of Bornu during the 1670's was in fact still the Mai 'Ali ibn 'Umar referred to in the previous extracts.

⁵ Çelebī uses the term 'Afnu'—used in the Sudan in Arabic chronicles for the Hausa people.

⁶ i.e. the seven 'true' Hausa States (*Hausa Bokoi*). See Sect. I, p. 56, n. 1.

their own error but, by reason of their lack of the true doctrine, another tribe takes captives from them in war and sells them at Aujila¹ and in Egypt. They have many chiefs, though I have not been there to see them. But this I do know: that however many clothed people there may be on the face of the earth, there are as many naked men in the land of Egypt.

JOHNSON · *Oyo: Rejection of an Alafin; Imperial Expansion*²

The reason why these Kings after rejection invariably committed suicide is this. The person of a King is regarded as sacred. Kings are venerated as gods, indeed many of them have been actually deified; but the moment a king's enormities provoke an open rebuke, or on being told publicly 'We reject you' by the constitution of the country, he must die that day. He cannot from the sanctity with which he has been regarded abdicate and continue to live as a private individual, or continue to reign by sufferance, by the clemency of aggrieved subjects. Hence he must die; and by his own hands, for it is an unthinkable horror among the Yorubas for any man to lay hands upon a being regarded as sacred. It is the prerogative of the Basorun to utter the sentence of rejection when the people are determined on it.

Even Noblemen also from their exalted positions are never ordered to execution. 'The King rejects you. The ancient Kings Oduduwa, Oranyan, Aganju, and others, reject you.' He must then take poison and die. Such deaths are accounted honourable; public and decent funerals are accorded them.

If any one allows himself to be executed, his carcase will be

¹ About 250 miles south-south-east of Benghazi, on the main Bornu-Egypt trade route.

² From Samuel Johnson's *History of the Yorubas*, pp. 173-4. P. A. Talbot, *Southern Nigeria*, Oxford, 1926, i, p. 283, places Ojigi's reign in the last decade of the seventeenth century. According to Johnson's account a large proportion of the Alafins of Oyo of this period were 'rejected'. As he puts it (p. 177): 'The feeling had gained ground by this time that Kings should not be allowed to die a natural death. Unchecked despotism, unrestrained licence, insatiable greed, and wanton voluptuousness should not be allowed to flourish throughout the full term of a natural lifetime. The excesses of the Crown Prince also were unendurable; hence the earliest opportunity was usually sought for putting an end to their reign.' For the Basorun, see p. 86, n. 2.

treated like that of a common felon, and his house pulled down. Therefore a faint-hearted individual would be despatched by his nearest relatives to save themselves from indelible disgrace. An honourable burial will then be accorded to the illustrious dead. . . .

Ojigi, who was elected to the vacant throne, was a powerful and warlike King. He extended his conquests to the Dahomian territory. In three expeditions headed by the Basorun and the Gbonka Latoyo, the Dahomians were brought fully under subjection.

Yansumi, an Idahomian town, was taken and destroyed. He sent an expedition also against the Igbonas.

This King, in order to show his undisputed sovereignty over the whole of the Yoruba country, including Benin, sent out a large expedition which struck the Niger in the north, near the Ibaribas, and coasted along the right bank until they arrived at the coast and returned to Oyo by the Popo country. Great exploits were reported of the leaders.

Personally, he was a very good man, but a too indulgent father. The Aremo¹ by his cruelties and excesses brought about the father's rejection and death. He ordered Oluke the Basorun's son to be unlawfully beaten. As this wrong could not be avenged without serious consequences, and as the King did not punish the wrong doer, it was thought more expeditious to effect the King's death; for about this time the custom began to prevail for the Aremos to die with the father, as they enjoy unrestrained liberty with the father. A pretext was soon found for rejecting the King and fond father, and consequently he died, and his eldest son with him. . . .

DA SORRENTO · *Warri: Ecclesiastical Match-Making*²

. . . The vice-superior, father *Angelo Maria d'Aiaccio* of the province of *Corsica*, together with father *Bonaventura da Firenze*,

¹ Crown prince, heir apparent.

² From Father Jerom Merolla da Sorrento, *A Voyage to the Congo and several other countries chiefly in Southern Africk, in the year 1682*, translated from the Italian and published in A. and J. Churchill, *Collection of Voyages and Travels* (3rd ed., 1744–6), i, pp. 606–7. Father Merolla da Sorrento, a 'Capuchin and Apostolic Missioner', travelled in the Kingdom of the Congo (now Portuguese Angola), but his information about Warri seems to have been second-hand.

having but just set footing in the kingdom of *Ouueri* [Warri], they were very courteously received by that King. This prince was better bred than ordinary, having been brought up amongst the *Portuguese*s, whose language he was an absolute master of, and could besides write and read, a qualification unusual among these *Ethiopian* princes. Almost at the first sight of the King, the vice-superior broke out into these words: *If your majesty does desire to have me to continue within your dominions, you must lay your injunctions on your subjects that they embrace the holy state of matrimony, according to our rites and ceremonies; and moreover, that whereas now the young men and women go naked till they are marriageable, I desire your majesty to command that they may all go covered.* To which the King answered, that as to what related to his subjects, he would take care that they should comply with his request; but as for himself, he could never consent to do it, unless he were married to a *White*, as some of his predecessors had been.¹ But what *White* would care to marry with a *Black*, even though he were a crowned head, especially among the *Portuguese*s, who naturally despise them? Nevertheless the pious father, trusting in God's providence to promote his own glory, gave no repulse to the obstinate monarch, but seemed to approve of all he said. To bring this good work to effect, he immediately departed, taking his way towards the island of St. *Thomas*, situate under the equinoctial line, and reckoned one of the nine countries conquered by the *Portuguese*s in *Africa*. There he made it his business to inquire after a *White* woman that would marry a *Black* that was a crowned head. Whereupon he was informed that there was one in that island, tho' of mean condition, whose poverty and meanness were nevertheless ennobled by a virtuous education, and a comely personage. . . .

The young lady not long afterwards, having first taken leave of her relations, set out with some few *Portuguese*s, and the missioner, for the aforesaid kingdom. Being just entered the confines, she was joyfully and universally saluted by the people for their Queen, having triumphal arches raised for her, and several other demonstrations of joy paid her by the inhabitants. Being arrived at the King's palace, she was received by that

¹ A reference presumably to the former Olu, Antonio Domingo. (See Sect. V, pp. 130-1.)

monarch like another *Rachel* by *Jacob*, *Esther* by *Ahasuerus*, or *Artemisia* by *Mausolus*; and afterwards marry'd by him after the Christian manner, thereby giving a good example to his subjects, who soon forgot their former licentious principles, and submitted to be restrained by the rules of the gospel, that is, were all married according to the rites and ceremonies of the church.

B A R B O T · *Bonny in 1699: Commercial Procedure*¹

Trade adjusted

The thirtieth of June, 1699, being ashore, had a new conference which produced nothing; and then *Pepprell* [Pepple] the King's brother, made us a discourse, as from the King, importing, *He was sorry we would not accept of his proposals; that it was not his fault, he having a great esteem and regard for the Whites, who had much enriched him by trade; That what he so earnestly insisted on, thirteen bars for male, and ten for female slaves, came from the country people holding up the price of slaves at their inland markets, seeing so many large ships resort to Bandy [Bonny] for them; but to moderate matters, and incourage trading with us, he would be contented with thirteen bars for males, and nine bars and two brass rings for females, etc.* Upon which we offered thirteen bars for men, and nine for women, and proportionably for boys and girls, according to their ages; after this we parted, without concluding any thing farther.

On the first of *July*, the King sent for us to come ashore, we staid there till four in the afternoon, and concluded the trade on the terms offered them the day before; the King promising to come the next day aboard to regulate it, and be paid his duties. . . .

The second, heavy rain all the morning. At two o'clock we fetch'd the King from shore, attended by all his *Caboceiros*² and

¹ From the Journal of Mr. James Barbot, *An Abstract of a Voyage to New Calabar River or Rio Real in the year 1699*, translated and published in Churchill, *Collection of Voyages and Travels* (3rd ed., 1744–6), v, p. 459. Jacques (James) Barbot accompanied his better-known brother, John, on a trading voyage from London to New Calabar in 1699.

² Portuguese term, meaning those involved as middlemen in the European trade: hence, in a general sense, as here, chiefs and elders.

officers, in three large canoos; and entring the ship, was saluted with seven guns. The King had on an old-fashion'd scarlet coat, laced with gold and silver, very rusty, and a fine hat on his head, but bare-footed; all his attendants showing great respect to him and, since our coming hither, none of the natives have dared to come aboard of us, or sell the least thing, till the King had adjusted trade with us.

We had again a long discourse with the King and *Pepprell* his brother, concerning the rates of our goods and his customs. This *Pepprell* being a sharp blade, and a mighty talking *Black*, perpetually making objections against something or other, and teasing us for this or that *Dassy*,¹ or present, as well as for drams, etc., it were to be wish'd, that such a one as he were out of the way, to facilitate trade. . . .

Thus, with much patience, all our matters were adjusted indifferently, after their way, who are not very scrupulous to find excuses or objections, for not keeping literally to any verbal contract; for they have not the art of reading and writing, and therefore we are forced to stand to their agreement, which often is no longer than they think fit to hold it themselves. The King order'd the publick cryer to proclaim the permission of trade with us, with the noise of his trumpets, being elephants teeth, made much after the same fashion as is used at the Gold Coast, we paying sixteen brass rings to the fellow for his fee. The Blacks objected against our wrought pewter and tankards, green beads, and other goods, which they would not accept of. . . .

We gave the usual presents to the King, etc. . . . To Captain Forty, the King's general, Captain Pepprell, Captain Boileau, alderman Bougsby, my lord Willyby, duke of Monmouth, drunken Henry and some others two firelocks, eight hats, nine narrow Guinea stuffs: We adjusted with them the reduction of our merchandize into bars of iron, as the standard coin,² viz.: One bunch of beads, one bar. Four strings of rings, ten rings in each, one ditto. Four copper bars, one ditto. One piece of narrow Guinea stuff one ditto. . . . And so pro rata for every sort of goods. . . .

¹ *Dassy* (modern 'dash'), present; possibly from the Portuguese *das me*, give me.

² See G. I. Jones, *Africa*, xxviii. 1, pp. 49–50, for the use of iron bars as the local currency unit for purposes of foreign trade.

The price of provisions and wood was also regulated.

Sixty King's yams, one bar; one hundred and sixty slave's yams, one bar; for fifty thousand yams to be delivered to us. A butt of water, two rings. For the length of wood, seven bars, which is dear; but they were to deliver it ready cut into our boat. For a goat, one bar. A cow, ten or eight bars, according to its bigness. A hog, two bars. A calf, eight bars. A jar of palm oil, one bar and a quarter.

We paid also the King's duties in goods; five hundred slaves, to be purchased at two copper rings a head.

We also advanced to the King, by way of loan, the value of a hundred and fifty bars of iron, in sundry goods; and to his principal men, and others, as much again, each in proportion of his quality and ability. . . .¹

A K I G A · *Tiv and Fulani*²

The Tiv married women from the neighbouring Bush Tribes,³ and had children by them, with sons and daughters. When their sons grew to manhood and their daughters reached puberty, the Bush People cast their eyes upon them, and demanded that the Tiv should now give them their daughters to marry in return. When they refused to do this, the Bush Men were angry, 'What!' they cried. 'Why are these Tiv becoming so assertive? We used to give them our daughters to marry, thinking of our children who were yet unborn; why will they not give their daughters to our sons? Is it we who have been fools then?' This was the beginning of the quarrel.⁴

¹ For the system of advances to African traders, see G. I. Jones, op. cit., p. 50.

² From Akiga, *Akiga's Story*, translated and annotated by Rupert East, Oxford, 1939, pp. 21–23—a study of Tiv history and institutions, originally written in Tiv. Akiga, or Akighirga, son of Sai—a senior elder and blacksmith—was born in the late 1890's, and was first of his people to come under the influence of the Dutch Reformed Church Mission. This account of Tiv–Fulani relationships, based upon traditional sources—Rupert East suggests—refers to a period not earlier than the end of the seventeenth century, the supposed period of Tiv migrations from the south-east.

³ 'Bush People'—the term used by the Tiv to refer to the tribes to the east and south of them.

⁴ 'Up to the present day (1939) it is almost unknown for a Tiv woman to marry outside the tribe, though the men, especially in the border clans, will take non-Tiv wives' (East, op. cit., p. 21).

Faced with the hostility of the Bush Tribes, the Tiv abandoned their site and began to move down. They left the east on the one hand, the south on the other, and came down between, until they met with the people called Fulani. The Fulani shepherded them and escorted them down. They never troubled them, or oppressed them in any way, but came down in company with the Tiv, quite peacefully. Thus the Tiv formed a close friendship with them. Whenever they came up against any other tribe that wanted to fight with them, the Fulani would attack their enemies and drive them off. When the Tiv saw the strength of the Fulani, they gave them the name of 'Pul', which in the Tiv language means 'to be stronger'.¹ For the Fulani were stronger than all others at that time; whatever tribe they attacked they were sure to overcome it.

The Fulani fought with staves, little white spears, and swords, but they never agreed to give the Tiv any of these weapons of war, for they did not want to teach them all they knew. Some, judging only by outward appearances, say that the Tiv are the slaves of the Fulani. This was never so; but in so far that they greatly helped the Tiv in delivering them from the hands of the Bush Tribes, so the Tiv repaid them by giving them the help of their labour. For the Tiv were a people who understood how to cultivate the soil, whereas the Fulani were a tribe of herdsmen, and knew nothing about farming. So when they went out with their cattle to graze, the Tiv would do their farm work for them.² The two races differed in appearance because the Fulani wore clothes, but the Tiv were unkempt; and for this reason the Fulani children used to jeer at the Tiv children, whenever there was a quarrel, saying, 'Your fathers are slaves who work for our fathers'. But their fathers never took any notice of this, nor did the Tiv.

The Fulani and the Tiv, however, were not together very long before they parted company. The two peoples were so

¹ East (op. cit., p. 24) points out that this is a fancy derivation: 'Pul is the true root of the name by which the Fulani call themselves, of which the term "Fulani" is a Hausa corruption. But this error is in itself evidence in favour of the authenticity of the tradition. . . . For if the Tiv were once in such close contact with the Fulani as they claim, it is evidently thus that they came to learn their real name.'

² 'There is nothing improbable in this account of the arrangement between the Tiv and the Fulani by which the former did the farm work in return for protection. . . . Before the *jihad* (early nineteenth century) the Fulani were not in a position to requisition labour for this purpose . . .' (East, loc. cit.).

intimately interconnected that they did not refrain from inter-marriage. But the Tiv did not like the Fulani marrying their daughters. When the elders saw that this was their intention, they were not at all pleased. 'For', they said, 'this is just the thing which we have already refused to allow, and here it is again. We do not let the Bush Tribes marry our daughters, so why should the Fulani be scheming to take them? They are not of our race, and it is best that we should separate. We will go our way, and they shall go theirs. But let us not part with ill feeling, let us part good friends.' So the Tiv elders, having first talked the matter over amongst themselves, called all the chief men of the Fulani, and they sat down and discussed it together. . . . The Fulani elders agreed to the Tiv proposal, but they said, 'Since our parting is without rancour, it seems to us that each of us should leave some memorial of the event. What do you think? It may be that some day hence our children and your children will not know of the good fellowship that exists between us today. Let us then appoint a token.' The Tiv said, 'That is not necessary. Even though we have no token, the resemblance between us is the main thing. For our daughters have borne children to you, and your daughters have married our sons and borne children to us, so that we have indeed intermingled our blood; this is a fact which will never be forgotten.' The Fulani said, 'Nevertheless, let us make it an occasion for giving small presents. We will set aside a month in which you may catch us and take a little money from us, or a cloth which has been burnt in the fire.'¹ 'Very well then', said the Tiv; but it did not seem to them to matter very much. They agreed in order that the Fulani should leave them to go their own way. And that is why, even down to the present day, the Tiv do not trouble to catch the Fulani, and receive their cloths.

So they separated. The Fulani turned back towards the rising sun, and the Tiv passed on down alone. . . .

¹ The month referred to as set aside by the Fulani for present-giving between 'cousins' is the Muslim month *muharram* (see East, op. cit., pp. 24-25).

SECTION SIX

The Eighteenth Century

VAN NYENDAEL · *Benin in 1700.*¹ *The People*

The habit of the *Negroes* here is neat, ornamental, and much more magnificent than that of the *Negroes* of the *Gold Coast*. The Rich amongst them wear first a white Callico, or Cotton Cloth, about one yard long, and half so broad, which serves them as Drawers; over that they wear a finer white Cotton Dress, that is commonly about sixteen or twenty Yards long, which they very ornamentally pleat in the middle, casting over it a Scarf of about a Yard long, and two Spans broad, the end of which is adorned with Fringe or Lace; which is somewhat like the female *Negroes* on the *Gold Coast*: the upper Part of their Body is mostly naked.

The mean Sort go thus cloathed, but the Stuff they wear is much coarser and, as to fine or coarse, each person is governed by his Circumstances.

The Wives of the Great Lords wear Callico Paans² woven in this country, which are very fine, and very beautifully chequer'd with several Colours: these Paans or Cloaths are not very long, and are buckled together. . . . The upper Part of their Body is Covered with a beautiful Cloth of about a Yard long, instead of a Veil, like that which the Women wear on the *Gold Coast*: Their Necks are adorned with Necklaces of Coral, very agreeably disposed or plaited; their arms are dressed up with bright Copper or Iron arm-rings; as are also the Legs of some

¹ These two extracts are from a letter by David Van Nyendael to William Bosman, written 'From on Board the Yacht Johanna Maria', dated 1 Sept. 1702, and published by Bosman in his *New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea*, London, 1705 (original Dutch edition, Utrecht, 1704), pp. 399–428 in the 1721 (English) edition. Bosman spent fourteen years on the Coast, in the employ of the Dutch West India Company, rising to the post of Chief Factor at Axim.

² Paan, or *Pagne*, from Portuguese *pano*, an African cloth, of the type worn by women.

of them, and their Fingers are as thick crowded with Copper Rings as they can possibly wear them.

Thus set out, Sir, they look pretty tolerable, and may pass for such for want of better. . . .

Almost all the Children go naked; the Boys till they are ten or twelve years old, and the Girls till Nature discovers their Maturity; till then they wear nothing but some Strings of Coral about their Middles, which is not sufficient to hide their Nudities.

The Men don't curl or adorn their Hair, but content themselves with letting it grow in its natural posture, except buckling it in two or three Places, in order to hang a great Coral to it; but the Women's Hair is very artificially turned up into great and small Buckles, and divided on the Crown of the Head, like a Cock's Comb inverted, by which means the smaller Curls are placed in exact Order. Some divide their Hair into twenty Plaits and Curls according as it happens to be either thick or thin. Some oil it with the Oil which they roast out of the Kernels of Oil-Nuts, by which means it loses its Black Colour, and in process of Time turns a sort of Green or Yellow, that they are very fond of; notwithstanding which, in my Opinion, it looks hideously.

The *Negroes* are very libidinous, which they ascribe to their *Pardon* [palm] wine, and good Eating, which invigorates Nature. They are indeed much in the right as to the last, but I never could observe any such virtue in the former.

They are not inclined to talk of Procreation in obscene or too expressive Terms; they believe it to be designed by Nature for obscure Retreats, and therefore very improper to be talked of in broad Terms; but he that can clearly express this Subject in well meaning Hints, passes for a Wit. Hence each of them aims at diverting Fables or Similitudes tending this Way. . . . If a Woman bear two Children at a Birth, it is immediately believed to be a good Omen, and the King is immediately informed thereof, who causes publick Joy to be expressed with all sorts of their Musick. . . .

In all Parts of the *Benin* Territories, Twin-Births are esteemed good Omens, except at Arabo, where they are of the contrary Opinion, and treat the Twin-bearing Woman very barbarously; for they actually kill both Mother and Infants, and sacrifice them to a certain Devil, which they fondly imagine harbours in

a Wood near the Village: But if the man happens to be more than ordinarily tender, he generally buys off his Wife, by sacrificing a Female Slave in her Place; but the Children are without possibility of Redemption oblig'd to be made the satisfactory Offerings which their Savage Law requires.

In the Year 1699, a Merchant's Wife, commonly called Ellaroe or Mopop, Lay-in of Two Children, and her Husband redeemed her with a Slave, but sacrificed his Children. After which I had frequent opportunity of seeing and talking with the disconsolate Mother, who never could see an Infant without a very melancholy Reflection on the Fate of her own, which always extorted briny Tears from her. . . .

These dismal events have in process of Time made such Impressions on the Men, that when the Time of their Wife's Delivery approaches, they send them to another Country; which makes me believe that for the Future they will correct their Inhumanities.

The Multiplication of Mankind goes forward very successfully here, which is not very hard to believe, since the Women are not barren, and the Men vigorous; besides which, they have the Advantage of a Choice out of their great Number of Wives. . . .

The *Negroes* of this Country don't seem so much afraid of Death as in other Lands: they are not uneasy at the naming of it, and ascribe the Length or Brevity of Life to their Gods. Notwithstanding which, they are very zealous for the use of those Means which are thought proper for the Prolongation of Life, for if they fall sick, the first Refuge is the Priest, who here, as well as on the *Gold Coast*, acts the *Doctor*: he first administers green Herbs, which proving ineffectual, he hath recourse to Sacrifices. If the Patient recovers, the Priest is very much esteemed; but if not, he is dismissed, and another, from whom better Success is expected, is called in.

VAN NYENDAEL · *Benin in 1700: The Social Order*

This River [of Benin] sprouts itself into innumerable Branches, some of which are so wide that they very well deserve the Name of Rivers; and the Banks of each of them are inhabited by a Particular Nation, govern'd by its own King. . . .

About a Mile and a Half from its Mouth, there are two Branches about half a Mile from each other; upon one of which the *Portuguese* have a Lodge and Church at the Town of *Awerri* [Warri], which is governed by its particular and independent King, who doth not treat the King of *Great Benin* otherwise than as his Neighbour and Ally: tho' that vain Prince shows no Marks of Esteem for him, nor any other Potentates, imagining, that if he is not the greatest King in the whole, yet indisputably in the *Guinean* World: That Part of it that is situate above one hundred Miles beyond his own Territories, being as little known to him as the large Remainder of the Globe.

The common Trading-Place is here call'd *Arabo*, situate above sixty Miles above the River's Mouth. So far and yet farther our Ships may very conveniently come; in their Passage sailing by hundreds of Branches of this River, besides Creeks, some of which are very wide.

What I have already hinted, is sufficient to give you an Idea of the Breadth of this River; but its Length and Source I have not been able to discover, no *Negro* being able to give me an exact Account of it: But I believe its Branches extend into all the Circumjacent Countries, for I have seen several Men that came from *Ardra*, *Calbary* [Calabar], and several other *Places*, in order to *Trade*, which were taken on this River by the Robbers and sold for Slaves.

These Robbers, or Pyrates, live just at the Mouth of the River, and are called the Pyrates of *Usa*: they are very poor, and live only upon Robbery; they sail hence to all Parts of this River, and seize all that lights in their way, whether Men, Beasts, or Goods; all which they sell to the first that come hither, for Victuals, with which they are not at all provided. . . .

The Inhabitants of this River and the neighbouring Country have several Princes; and indeed, each small Nation is govern'd by his own King, though all of them are Vassals of the King of *Benin*, except those of *Awerri*, where the *Portuguese* live, and the Pyrates of *Usa*, both whom would never yet submit to his Yoke. They are all Freemen, notwithstanding which, they are treated as *Slaves* by their King, and are so far from taking it as an Unhappiness, that the Title of King's Slave is a distinguishing Mark of Honour amongst them. . . .

The Inhabitants of *Great Benin* are generally good-natur'd, and very civil, from whom it is easy to obtain whatever we desire by soft Means. If we make them liberal Presents, they will endeavour to recompense them doubly; and if we want anything, and ask it of them, they very seldom deny us, tho' they have Occasion for it themselves.

But they are so far in the right to expect that their Courtesy should be repaid with Civility, and not with Arrogance or Rudeness; for to think of forcing any thing from them, is to dispute with the Moon.

They are very prompt in Business, and will not suffer any of their ancient Customs to be abolish'd; in which, if we comply with them, they are very easy to deal with, and will not be wanting in any thing on their Part requisite to a good Agreement. But what is worst of all is that they are very tedious in Dealing. Many Times they have a Stock of Elephant's Teeth by them, which we are generally eight or ten Days before we can agree with them for; but this is managed with so many ceremonious Civilities that it is impossible to be angry with them.

Another Inconvenience, which really deserves Complaint, is, that at our Arrival here, we are obliged to trust them with Goods to make Paans or Cloaks of; for the payment of which we frequently stay so long, that by reason of the Advancement of the Season, the Consumption of our Provisions, and the Sickness or Mortality of our Men, we are obliged to depart without our Money; but on the other hand, the next Time we come hither, are sure to be honestly paid for the Whole.

The Persons which treat with us on their behalf, are such as are thereto appointed by the Government, and are called by the above-mention'd Names of Mercadors and Fiadors; and these are the only Merchants with which we deal: this Custom having obtained, by reason that these Factors can speak a miserable sort of *Portuguese*, which qualifies them to talk with us. This is their only Excellency, without which they would be look'd on as the very Scum of their Countrymen, and not thought worthy a Name amongst them.

At our Arrival here, we are obliged to pay some sort of Customs to these Bookers and the Governors, which are so inconsiderable, that they are hardly worth mentioning. . . .

I have observed here three States,¹ besides the King, who governs absolutely, his Will being a Law and Bridle to his Subjects, which none of them dare oppose.

Next him, the first and highest State is composed of three Persons, called here Great Lords, or Great Men, which are always near the King's Person; any Person that wants to apply to His Majesty, is obliged to address himself first to them, and they undertake to acquaint him with it, and return his Answer. But they are sure to inform him only of what they please themselves, and consequently in the King's Name they act as they think fit. So that in Reality the whole Government depends solely upon them; which may the more easily happen, because, except a few, no persons are admitted into the King's Presence, much less allowed to speak with him.

The second State or Rank is composed of those which are here called *Aro de Roe*, or Street-Kings: some of which preside over the Community, and others over the Slaves; some over Military Affairs, others over the Affairs relating to Cattle and the Fruits of the Earth, etc. And, indeed, here is a particular Supervisor over every Thing that can be thought of.

Out of the Number of these *Aro de Roes* are chosen the Viceroy and Governors of the Countries which are Subject to the King: these are all under the Command of and responsible to the three Great Men on all Occasions.

They obtain these honourable Posts by the Recommendation of these three Lords; and the King, as an Ensign of this Honour, presents each of them with a String of Coral, that being equivalent to the Arma of an Order of Knighthood: this String they are obliged to wear about their Necks, without ever daring to put it off on any Account whatever.

For if they are so unhappy as to lose it, or carelessly suffer it to be stolen, they are ipso facto irretrievably condemned to die. . . .

The King keeps these Corals in his own Possession; and the counterfeiting, or having any of them in Possession without his Grant, is punished with Death. They are made of pale red Earth or Stone, and very well glazed, and very like speckled red Marble.

¹ For an account of the complex Benin system of 'Estates', ranks, and titles, see R. E. Bradbury, 'The Benin Kingdom', *Ethnographic Survey, West Africa*, part xiii, pp. 35-44.

From the last Relation, it is easy to infer, that the Fiadors are the third Rank or State of this Country: for no Person is permitted to wear this Coral, unless honour'd by the King with some Post; since, as I have already told you, they can have it only from the King.

Besides the Fiadors, under the same Rank are reckoned also the Mercadors, or Merchants; Fulladors, or Intercessors; the Veilles, or Elders, all of which are distinguish'd by the above-mentioned Mark of Honour.

And besides these Three, I know of no other Offices or Dignities, wherefore the Commonalty takes place next, very few of which are laborious or industrious, unless it be those who are wretched poor; the others laying the whole Burthen of their Work on their Wives and Slaves, whether it be tilling the Ground, spinning of Cotton, weaving of Cloaths, or any other Handicraft; whilst they, if they have but the least Stock, apply themselves to Merchandise alone. Here are very few Manual Arts, besides weaving, practis'd or understood. The chief Workmen here, are either Smiths, Carpenters, or Leather Dressers; but all their Workmanship is so very clumsy, that a Boy that has been but one Month learning in *Europe* would outdo them.

The Inhabitants of this Country, if possessed of any Riches, eat and drink very well; that is to say, of the best. The common Diet of the Rich is Beef, Mutton or Chickens, and Jammes [yams] for their Bread; which, after they have boiled, they beat very fine, in order to make Cakes of it: they frequently Treat one another, and impart a Portion of their Superfluity to the Necessitous.

The meaner Sort content themselves with smoak'd or dry'd Fish, which, if salted, is very like what we in *Europe* call Raf or Reekel; their Bread is also Jammes, Bananas, and Beans; their drink Water and *Pardon-Wine*, which is none of the best. The richer Sort drink Water, Brandy when they can get it. The King, the Great Lords, and every Governor, who is but indifferently rich, subsist several Poor at their Place of Residence on their Charity, employing those who are fit for any work, in order to help them to a Maintenance, and the rest they keep for God's Sake, and to obtain the Character of being charitable; so that here are no Beggars: And this necessary Care succeeds so well, that we do not see many remarkably poor amongst them....

The King hath a very rich Income; for his Territories are very large, and full of Governors, and each knows how many Bags of Boesies (the Money of this Country) [cowries] he must annually raise to the King, which amounts to a vast Sum, which 'tis impossible to make any Calculation of. Others, of a meaner Rank than the former, instead of Money, deliver to the King Bulls, Cows, Sheep, Chickens, Jammes, and Cloaths; in short, whatever he wants for his Housekeeping; so that he is not oblig'd to one Farthing Expense on that account, and consequently he lays up his whole pecuniary Revenue untouched.

Duties or Tolls on imported and exported Wares are not paid here; but everyone pays a certain Sum annually to the Governor of the Place where he lives, for the Liberty of Trading; so that his Revenue being determin'd and settled, he can easily compute what he hath to expect annually.

S M I T H · *Secession in Benin*¹

As this is the most potent kingdom of *Guinea*, and most nearly resembles an *European Monarchy*, I shall give the Reader some Account of its Metropolis, the King's Court and Grandeur.

Benin, a City about sixty miles from Agatton [Gwato] . . . is the Residence of the King, and gives its Name to the whole Empire. . . . It was once a very populous Place, but some Years since, the King causing two Street-Kings (who are like our Aldermen, or Common-Council-Men) to be killed, under Pretence of attempting his Life, tho' the Contrary evidently appear'd to the whole World, and that he did it only to get their Wealth, which he did. This led the King to seek for a third, but this Street-King, or Alderman, was so well-belov'd by his Fellow-Citizens, that he had timely Notice given him of his Prince's Intentions, and accordingly took his Flight, accompanied with three-Fourths of the Inhabitants of the City. Upon which the King caus'd the Militia of the Country to pursue

¹ From William Smith, *A New Voyage to Guinea*, London, 1744, pp. 233–6. William Smith was surveyor to the Royal African Company, and visited Africa in 1726, to make surveys and drafts of English ports and settlements in Guinea (*D.N.B.*). Much of his material is derived from Bosman's *New Description of the Coast of Guinea* (1705), or, in the case of Benin, from Van Nyendael (see the preceding extract).

them, and oblige them to return; but they met with a Repulse, and was thereupon forc'd to retire. The King made a second Attempt, in which likewise he fail'd; whereupon the Alderman incens'd and flush'd with Victory, came directly to the City, where he plunder'd and pilfer'd, sparing no Place but the King's Palace. After which he retir'd, but continu'd for Ten Years to rob the Inhabitants of *Benin*, till, at length, at the Intercession of some *Europeans*, a Peace was concluded between him and the King, by which he was pardon'd, and entreated to return to his former Habitation, but the Alderman would not trust him, but lives about Three Day's Journey from *Benin*, where he has as great a Court and State as the King. However, the returning Citizens were friendly received, and many of them preferred to honourable Offices, in order to induce the rest to return, but that was of no Force, for they who were with the Alderman thought themselves as well off, and so this city has continu'd long depopulated. . . .

B A R B O T · *New Calabar in 1700*¹

Description of [New] Calabar

Barbot's Journal. The town is seated in a marshy island, often overflow'd by the river, the water running even between the houses, whereof there are about three hundred in a disorderly heap. The King's is pretty high and airy, which was some comfort to me during the time I staid there.

Hackbous Blacks [Ibos]. The land about the town being very barren, the inhabitants fetch all their substance from the country lying to the northward of them, call'd the Hackbous Blacks, a people much addicted to war and preying on their neighbours to the northward, and are themselves lusty tall men.

Markets. In their territories there are two market days every week, for slaves and provisions, which the *Calabar Blacks* keep very regularly to supply themselves both with provisions and slaves, palm-oil, palm-wine, etc., there being great plenty of the last.

The King. King *Robert* is a good civil man, about thirty years of age.

¹ From James Barbot, *Journal*, in Churchill, *Collection of Voyages and Travels*, v, pp. 461-4. See Sect. V, p. 140.

Drinking. Every evening they club together at one another's houses, by turns; providing two or three jugs of palm-wine, each of them containing twelve or fifteen gallons, to make merry, each person, man and woman, bringing their own stool to sit on. They sit round and drink to one another out of ox's horns, well polished, which hold a quart or more, singing and roaring all the while till the liquor is out.

Diet. Their common food is yams boil'd with fish and palm-oil, which they reckon dainty fare. . . .

Idols. Every house is full of idols, as well as the streets of the town. They call them *Jou-Jou*, being in the nature of tutelar gods. Many of them are dried heads of beasts, others made by the *Blacks* of clay and painted, which they worship and make offerings to.

Sacrifice. Before the King goes aboard a ship newly come in, he repairs to his idol house, with drums beating, and trumpets sounding, all his attendants bare-headed. There he makes abundance of bows to those puppets, begging of them to make his voyage prosperous: and then sacrifices a hen, which is tied above by one leg to the end of a long pole, and has a brass ring on the other leg, leaving the poor creature in that condition till it starves to death.

Every time their small fleet of canoes goes up for slaves, and when they return, they blow their horns or trumpets for joy; and the King never fails, at both those times, to pay his devotions to his idols, for their good success, and a short voyage. . . .

Description of Dony [Andoni]

Barbot's Journal. On the twenty-fourth of July I went to *Dony*, distant about twenty-five miles from *Bondy* [Bonny] road, along the river, in the long-boat, and arrived there at four in the afternoon. . . . I lay that night in the King's house, near his idol-house, which they call *Jou-Jou*. . . .

The King. The King of *Dony* is a very good-natur'd civil man, speaks *Portuguese* and seems to have been instructed by *Romish* priests who are sent over from time to time, from *St. Tomi* and *Brazil*. . . .

Prices of Slaves. . . . In 1703, or 1704, the price of slaves was twelve bars a man, and nine a woman.

The slaves got there, says he [Mr. Grazilhier], are generally pretty tall men, but washy and faint, by reason of their ill food, which is yams at best, and other such sorry provisions. A very considerable number of them is exported yearly from that river, by the Europeans; he having, as has been said above, seen there ten ships at a time, loading slaves, which is the reason the price of them varies so much, being double some years what it is others, according to the demand there is of them; the natives being cunning enough to enhance the price upon such occasions. He computes there are also exported from thence yearly, from thirty to forty tuns of elephants' teeth, all very fine and large, most by *Dutch* ships.

Goods Imported There. The most current goods to purchase slaves in *New Calabar*, in 1704, were iron bars, copper bars, of which two sorts, a great quantity, especially of the iron; rangoes,¹ beads goosberry-colour, large and small, *Indian* nica-nees,² little brass bells, three-pound copper basons, and some of two pounds; *Guinea* stuffs, ox-horns for drinking cups, pewter tankards great and small; blue linen, blue long beads, or pearls, spirits, blue perpets³ a few. . . .

E QUIAN O · *Ibo Society in Mid-Century*⁴

That part of Africa, known by the name of Guinea, to which the trade for slaves is carried on, extends along the coast above 3400 miles, from Senegal to Angola, and includes a variety of kingdoms. Of these the most considerable is the kingdom of

¹ Rangoes, for arangoes, 'a species of beads made of rough carnelian . . . imported [into England] from Bombay for re-exportation to Africa'. (*O.E.D.*)

² Nic(c)anees, some kind of piece-goods imported from India (*O.E.D.*).

³ Perpet, abbreviation for *perpetuana*, trade name for 'a durable fabric of wool, manufactured in England from the fifteenth century' (*O.E.D.*).

⁴ From *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African*, written by himself, London, 1789, pp. 3–25. According to his own account, Equiano (born c. 1745) was kidnapped from his home in Iboland during a slave-raiding expedition in 1756: he was taken in a slave-ship to Virginia, and later to England, where he was sold to Captain Henry Pascal, who gave him the name Gustavus Vassa. He purchased his freedom in 1766, but continued to sail on merchant ships until 1777, travelling as far as Greenland and Turkey. He later applied, unsuccessfully, to the Bishop of London to be sent as a missionary to Africa. In 1788 he petitioned the Queen of England on behalf of his fellow Africans, and took an active part in the anti-slavery movement of the day. In 1792 he married the daughter of James and Ann Cullen at Cambridge: his son, according to the Abbé Grégoire (*De la Littérature des Nègres*, Paris, 1808) became Secretary to the Vaccination Committee.

Benin, both as to extent and wealth, the richness and cultivation of the soil, the power of its king, and the number and warlike disposition of the inhabitants. It is situated nearly under the line, and extends along the coast about 170 miles, but runs back into the interior part of Africa, to a distance hitherto I believe unexplored by any traveller; and seems only terminated at length by the empire of Abyssinia, near 1500 miles from its beginning. This kingdom is divided into many provinces or districts: in one of the most remote and fertile of which I was born, in the year 1745, situated in a charming fruitful vale, named Essaka. The distance of this province from the capital of Benin and the sea coast must be very considerable; for I had never heard of white men or Europeans, nor of the sea; and our subjection to the king of Benin was little more than nominal; for every transaction of the government, as far as my slender observation extended, was conducted by the chiefs or elders of the place. The manners and government of a people who have little commerce with other countries are generally very simple; and the history of what passes in one family or village, may serve as a specimen of the whole nation. My father was one of those elders or chiefs I have spoken of, and was styled Embrenché;¹ a term, as I remember, importing the highest distinction, and signifying in our language a mark of grandeur. This mark is conferred on the person entitled to it, by cutting the skin across at the top of the forehead, and drawing it down to the eyebrows; and, while it is in this situation, applying a warm hand, and rubbing it until it shrinks up into a thick weal across the lower part of the forehead. Most of the judges and senators were thus marked; my father had long borne it: I had seen it conferred on one of my brothers, and I also was destined to receive it by my parents. Those Embrenché, or chief men, decided disputes, and punished crimes; for which purpose they always assembled together. The proceedings were generally short; and in most cases the law of retaliation prevailed. I remember a man was brought before my father, and the other judges, for kidnapping a boy; and, although he was the son of a chief, or senator, he was condemned to make recompense by a man or woman slave. Adultery, however, was sometimes punished with slavery or

¹ Cf. the term 'Breeche' used in a similar sense below, p. 179.

death; a punishment which I believe is inflicted on it throughout most of the nations of Africa: so sacred among them is the honour of the marriage-bed, and so jealous are they of the fidelity of their wives. Of this I recollect an instance—A woman was convicted before the judges of adultery, and delivered over, as the custom was, to her husband to be punished. Accordingly, he determined to put her to death; but, it being found, just before her execution, that she had an infant at her breast, and no woman being prevailed on to perform that part of a nurse, she was spared on account of the child. The men, however, do not preserve the same constancy to their wives which they expect from them; for they indulge in a plurality, though seldom in more than two. Their mode of marriage is thus:—Both parties are usually betrothed when young by their parents (though I have known the males to betroth themselves). On this occasion a feast is prepared, and the bride and bridegroom stand up in the midst of all their friends, who are assembled for the purpose, while he declares that she is thenceforth to be looked upon as his wife, and that no person is to pay any addresses to her. This is also immediately proclaimed in the vicinity, on which the bride retires from the assembly. Some time after she is brought home to her husband, and then another feast is made, to which the relations of both parties are invited: her parents then deliver her to the bridegroom, accompanied with a number of blessings; and at the same time they tie round her waist a cotton string, of the thickness of a goose quill, which none but married women are permitted to wear; she is now considered as completely his wife; and at this time the dowry is given to the new married pair, which generally consists of portions of land, slaves, and cattle, household goods, and implements of husbandry. These are offered by the friends of both parties; besides which the parents of the bridegroom present gifts to those of the bride, whose property she is looked upon before marriage; but, after it, she is esteemed the sole property of the husband. The ceremony being now ended, the festival begins, which is celebrated with bonfires, and loud acclamations of joy, accompanied with music and dancing.

We are almost a nation of dancers, musicians, and poets. Thus every great event, such as a triumphant return from battle, or other cause of public rejoicing, is celebrated in public

dances, which are accompanied with songs and music suited to the occasion. The assembly is separated into four divisions, which dance either apart or in succession, and each with a character peculiar to itself. The first division contains the married men, who, in their dances, frequently exhibit feats of arms, and the representation of a battle. To these succeed the married women, who dance in the second division. The young men occupy the third; and the maidens the fourth. Each represents some interesting scene of real life, such as a great achievement, domestic employment, a pathetic story, or some rural sport; and, as the subject is generally founded on some recent event, it is therefore ever new. This gives our dances a spirit and variety which I have scarcely seen elsewhere. We have many musical instruments, particularly drums of different kinds, a piece of music which resembles a guitar, and another much like a stickado. These last are chiefly used by betrothed virgins, who play on them on all grand festivals.

As our manners are simple, our luxuries are few. The dress of both sexes are nearly the same. It generally consists of a long piece of calico, or muslin, wrapped loosely round the body, somewhat in the form of a highland plaid. This is usually dyed blue, which is our favourite colour. It is extracted from a berry, and is brighter and richer than any I have seen in Europe. Besides this, our women of distinction wear golden ornaments, which they dispose with some profusion on their arms and legs. When our women are not employed with the men in tillage, their usual occupation is spinning and weaving cotton, which they afterwards dye, and make into garments. They also manufacture earthen vessels, of which we have many kinds. Among the rest tobacco pipes, made after the same fashion, and used in the same manner, as those in Turkey.

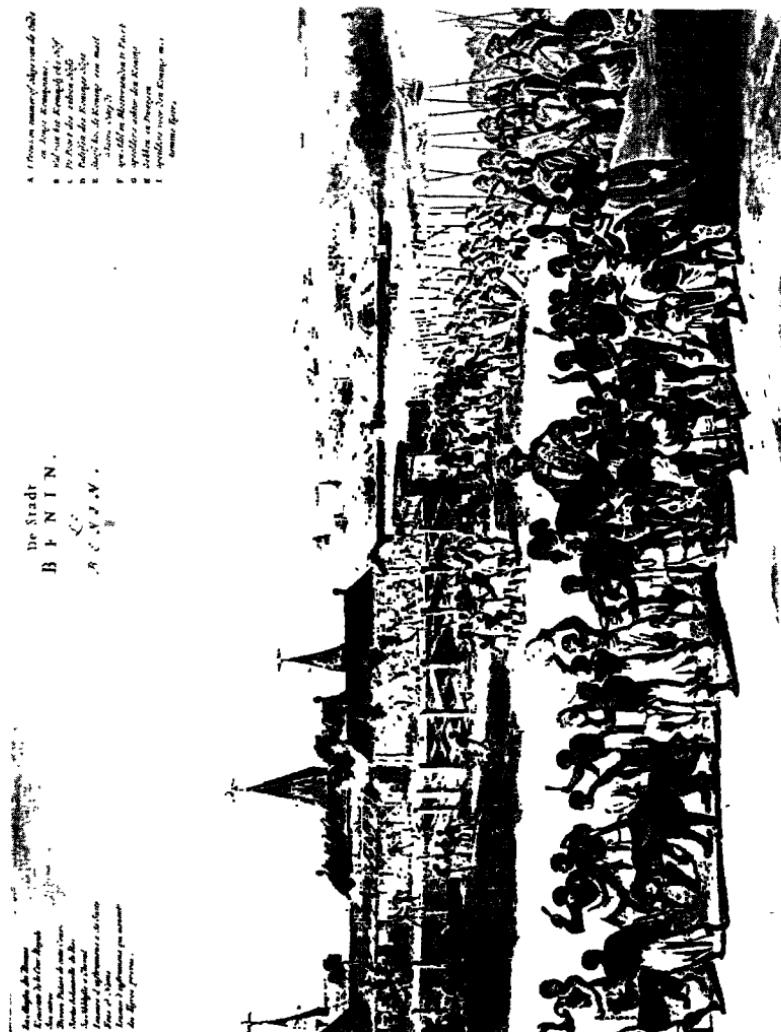
Our manner of living is entirely plain; for as yet the natives are unacquainted with those refinements in cookery which debauch the taste: Bullocks, goats, and poultry, supply the greatest part of their food. These constitute likewise the principal wealth of the country, and the chief articles of its commerce. The flesh is usually stewed in a pan. To make it savoury we sometimes use also pepper and other spices; and we have salt made of wood ashes. Our vegetables are mostly plantains, eadas, yams, beans, and Indian corn. The head of the

family usually eats alone; his wives and slaves have also their separate tables. Before we taste food, we always wash our hands; indeed our cleanliness on all occasions is extreme; but on this it is an indispensable ceremony. After washing, libation is made, by pouring out a small portion of the drink on the floor, and tossing a small quantity of the food in a certain place, for the spirits of departed relations, which the natives suppose to preside over their conduct, and guard them from evil. They are totally unacquainted with strong or spirituous liquors; and their principal beverage is palm wine. This is got from a tree of that name, by tapping it at the top, and fastening a large gourd to it; and sometimes one tree will yield three or four gallons in a night. When just drawn, it is of a most delicious sweetness, but in a few days it acquires a tartish and more spirituous flavour: though I never saw any one intoxicated by it. The same tree also produces nuts and oil. Our principal luxury is in perfumes; one sort of these is an odiferous wood of delicious fragrance: the other a kind of earth; a small portion of which thrown into the fire diffuses a most powerful odour. We beat this wood into powder, and mix it with palm-oil; with which both men and women perfume themselves.

In our buildings we study convenience rather than ornament. Each master of a family has a large square piece of ground, surrounded with a moat or fence, or inclosed with a wall made of red earth tempered, which, when dry, is as hard as brick. Within this are his houses to accommodate his family and slaves; which, if numerous, frequently present the appearance of a village. In the middle stands the principal building, appropriated to the sole use of the master, and consisting of two apartments; in one of which he sits in the day with his family, the other is left apart for the reception of his friends. He has besides these a distinct apartment, in which he sleeps, together with his male children. On each side are the apartments of his wives, who have also their separate day and night houses. The habitations of the slaves and their families are distributed throughout the rest of the inclosure. These houses never exceed one story in height; they are always built of wood, of stakes driven into the ground, crossed with wattles, and neatly plastered within and without. The roof is thatched with reeds. Our day houses are left open at the sides; but those in which we sleep are always

covered, and plastered in the inside with a composition mixed with cow dung, to keep off the different insects which annoy us during the night. The walls and floors also of these are generally covered with mats. Our beds consist of a platform, raised three or four feet from the ground, on which are laid skins, and different parts of a spungy tree called plantain. Our covering is calico or muslin, the same as our dress. The usual seats are a few logs of wood; but we have benches, which are generally perfumed, to accommodate strangers: these compose the greater part of our household furniture. Houses so constructed and furnished require but little skill to erect them. Every man is a sufficient architect for the purpose. The whole neighbourhood afford their unanimous assistance in building them, and in return receive and expect no other recompense than a feast.

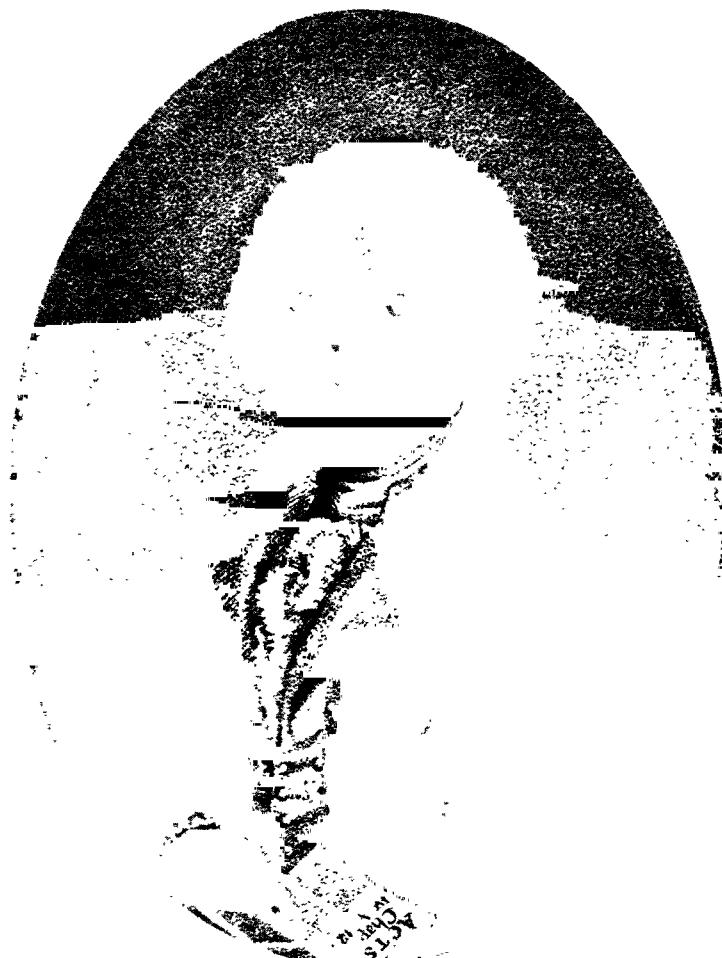
As we live in a country where nature is prodigal of her favours, our wants are few, and easily supplied; of course we have few manufactures. They consist for the most part of calicoes, earthen ware, ornaments, and instruments of war and husbandry. But these make no part of our commerce, the principal articles of which, as I have observed, are provisions. In such a state money is of little use; however we have some small pieces of coin, if I may call them such. They are made something like an anchor; but I do not remember either their value or denomination. We have also markets, at which I have been frequently with my mother. These are sometimes visited by stout mahogany-coloured men from the south-west of us: we call them *Oye-Eboe*, which term signifies red men living at a distance. They generally bring us fire-arms, gunpowder, hats, beads, and dried fish. The last we esteemed a great rarity, as our waters were only brooks and springs. These articles they barter with us for odoriferous woods and earth, and our salt of wood-ashes. They always carry slaves through our land; but the strictest account is exacted of their manner of procuring them before they are suffered to pass. Sometimes indeed we sold slaves to them, but they were only prisoners of war, or such among us as had been convicted of kidnapping, or adultery, and some other crimes, which we esteemed heinous. This practice of kidnapping induces me to think, that, notwithstanding all our strictness, their principal business among us was to trepan our people. I remember too they carried great sacks along with them, which not long after



Cavalcade at Benin, seventeenth century

From *Description de l'Afrique*, Olfert Dapper

PLATE 6



Portrait of Olaudah Equiano

From *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African,*
written by himself

I had an opportunity of fatally seeing applied to that infamous purpose.

Our land is uncommonly rich and fruitful, and produces all kinds of vegetables in great abundance. We have plenty of Indian corn, and vast quantities of cotton and tobacco. Our pine apples grow without culture; they are about the size of the largest sugar-loaf and finely flavoured. We have also spices of different kinds, particularly pepper; and a variety of delicious fruits which I have never seen in Europe; together with gums of various kinds, and honey in abundance. All our industry is exerted to improve those blessings of nature. Agriculture is our chief employment; and every one, even the children and women, are engaged in it. Thus we are all habituated to labour from our earliest years. Every one contributes something to the common stock; and, as we are unacquainted with idleness, we have no beggars. The benefits of such a mode of living are obvious. The West India planters prefer the slaves of Benin or Eboe to those of any other part of Guinea, for their hardiness, intelligence, integrity, and zeal. Those benefits are felt by us in the general healthiness of the people, and in their vigour and activity; I might have added too in their comeliness. Deformity is indeed unknown amongst us, I mean that of shape. Numbers of the natives of Eboe, now in London, might be brought in support of this assertion; for, in regard to complexion, ideas of beauty are wholly relative. I remember while in Africa to have seen three negro children, who were tawny, and another quite white, who were universally regarded by myself and the natives in general, as far as related to their complexions, as deformed. Our women too were, in my eyes at least, uncommonly graceful, alert, and modest to a degree of bashfulness; nor do I remember to have ever heard of an instance of incontinence amongst them before marriage. They are also remarkably cheerful. Indeed cheerfulness and affability are two of the leading characteristics of our nation.

Our tillage is exercised in a large plain or common, some hours walk from our dwellings, and all the neighbours resort thither in a body. They use no beasts of husbandry; and their only instruments are hoes, axes, shovels, and beaks, or pointed iron to dig with. Sometimes we are visited by locusts, which come in large clouds, so as to darken air, and destroy our

harvest. This however happens rarely, but when it does a famine is produced by it. I remember an instance or two wherein this happened. This common is often the theatre of war; and therefore when our people go out to till their land, they not only go in a body, but generally take their arms with them, for fear of a surprise; and, when they apprehend an invasion, they guard the avenues to their dwellings, by driving sticks into the ground, which are so sharp at one end as to pierce the foot, and are generally dipt in poison. From what I can recollect of these battles, they appear to have been irruptions of one little state or district on the other, to obtain prisoners or booty. Perhaps they were incited to this by those traders who brought the European goods I mentioned amongst us. Such a mode of obtaining slaves in Africa is common; and I believe more are procured this way, and by kidnapping, than any other. When a trader wants slaves, he applies to a chief for them, and tempts him with his wares. It is not extraordinary, if on this occasion he yields to the temptation with as little firmness, and accepts the price of his fellow creature's liberty with as little reluctance, as the enlightened merchant. Accordingly, he falls on his neighbours, and a desperate battle ensues. If he prevails, and takes prisoners, he gratifies his avarice by selling them; but, if his party be vanquished, and he falls into the hands of the enemy, he is put to death: for, as he has been known to foment their quarrels, it is thought dangerous to let him survive; and no ransom can save him, though all other prisoners may be redeemed. We have fire-arms, bows and arrows, broad two-edged swords and javelins; we have shields also, which cover a man from head to foot. All are taught the use of these weapons. Even our women are warriors, and march boldly out to fight along with the men. Our whole district is a kind of militia: On a certain signal given, such as the firing of a gun at night, they all rise in arms, and rush upon their enemy. It is perhaps something remarkable, that, when our people march to the field, a red flag or banner is borne before them. I was once a witness to a battle in our common. We had been all at work in it one day as usual, when our people were suddenly attacked. I climbed a tree at some distance, from which I beheld the fight. There were many women as well as men on both sides; among others my mother was there, and armed with a broad sword. After fighting for

a considerable time with great fury, and many had been killed, our people obtained the victory, and took their enemy's Chief prisoner. He was carried off in great triumph; and, though he offered a large ransom for his life, he was put to death. A virgin of note among our enemies had been slain in the battle, and her arm was exposed in our market-place, where our trophies were always exhibited. The spoils were divided according to the merit of the warriors. Those prisoners which were not sold or redeemed we kept as slaves: but, how different was their condition from that of the slaves in the West Indies! With us they do no more work than other members of the community, even their master; their food, clothing, and lodging, were nearly the same as theirs (except that they were not permitted to eat with those who were free born); and there was scarce any other difference between them than a superior degree of importance which the head of a family possesses in our state, and that authority which, as such, he exercises over every part of his household. Some of these slaves have even slaves under them, as their own property, and for their own use.

As to religion, the natives believe that there is one Creator of all things, and that he lives in the sun, and is girded round with a belt, that he may never eat or drink; but according to some, he smokes a pipe, which is our own favourite luxury. They believe he governs events, especially our deaths or captivity; but, as for the doctrine of eternity, I do not remember to have ever heard of it: some however believe in the transmigration of souls in a certain degree. Those spirits, which are not transmigrated, such as their dear friends or relations, they believe always attend them, and guard them from the bad spirits of their foes. For this reason, they always, before eating, as I have observed, put some small portion of the meat, and pour some of their drink, on the ground for them; and they often make oblations of the blood of beasts or fowls at their graves. I was very fond of my mother, and almost constantly with her. When she went to make these oblations at her mother's tomb, which was a kind of small solitary thatched house, I sometimes attended her. There she made her libations, and spent most of the night in cries and lamentations. I have often been extremely terrified on these occasions. The loneliness of the place, the darkness of the night, and the ceremony of libation, naturally

awful and gloomy, were heightened by my mother's lamentations; and these concurring with the doleful cries of birds, by which these places were frequented, gave an inexpressible terror to the scene.

We compute the year from the day on which the sun crosses the line; and, on its setting that evening, there is a general shout throughout the land; at least, I can speak from my own knowledge, throughout our vicinity. The people at the same time make a great noise with rattles not unlike the basket rattles used by children here, though much larger, and hold up their hands to heaven for a blessing. It is then the greatest offerings are made, and those children whom our wise men foretel will be fortunate are then presented to different people. I remember many used to come to see me, and I was carried about to others for that purpose. They have many offerings, particularly at full moons, generally two at harvest, before the fruits are taken out of the ground; and when any young animals are killed, sometimes they offer up part of them as a sacrifice. These offerings, when made by one of the heads of a family, serve for the whole. I remember we often had them at my father's and my uncle's, and their families have been present. Some of our offerings are eaten with bitter herbs. We had a saying among us to any one of a cross temper, 'That if they were to be eaten, they should be eaten with bitter herbs.'

We practised circumcision like the Jews, and made offerings and feasts on that occasion in the same manner as they did. Like them also our children were named from some event, some circumstance, or fancied foreboding, at the time of their birth. I was named Olaudah, which, in our language, signifies vicissitude, or fortunate also; one favoured, and having a loud voice, and well spoken. I remember we never polluted the name of the object of our adoration; on the contrary, it was always mentioned with the greatest reverence; and we were totally unacquainted with swearing, and all those terms of abuse and reproach which find their way so readily and copiously into the language of more civilized people. The only expressions of that kind I remember were 'May you rot', or 'may you swell', or 'may a beast take you.'

I have before remarked, that the natives of this part of Africa are extremely cleanly. This necessary habit of decency was with

us a part of religion, and therefore we had many purifications and washings; indeed almost as many, and used on the same occasions, if my recollection does not fail me, as the Jews. Those that touched the dead at any time were obliged to wash and purify themselves before they could enter a dwelling-house. Every woman too, at certain times, was forbidden to come into a dwelling-house, or touch any person, or any thing we eat. I was so fond of my mother I could not keep from her, or avoid touching her at some of those periods, in consequence of which I was obliged to be kept out with her, in a little house made for that purpose, till offering was made, and then we were purified.

Though we had no places of public worship, we had priests and magicians or wise men. I do not remember whether they had different offices, or whether they were united in the same persons, but they were held in great reverence by the people. They calculated our time, and foretold events, as their name imported, for we called them Ah-affoe-way-cah, which signifies calculators or yearly men, our year being called Ah-affoe. They wore their beards; and, when they died, they were succeeded by their sons. Most of their implements and things of value were interred along with them. Pipes and tobacco were also put into the grave with the corpse, which was always perfumed and ornamented; and animals were offered in sacrifice to them. None accompanied their funerals, but those of the same profession or tribe. These buried them after sunset, and always returned from the grave by a different way from that which they went.

These magicians were also our doctors or physicians. They practised bleeding by cupping; and were very successful in healing wounds, and expelling poisons. They had likewise some extraordinary method of discovering jealousy, theft, and poisoning; the success of which no doubt they derived from their unbounded influence over the credulity and superstition of the people. I do not remember what those methods were, except that as to poisoning. I recollect an instance or two, which I hope it will not be deemed impertinent here to insert, as it may serve as a kind of specimen of the rest, and is still used by the negroes in the West Indies. A young woman had been poisoned, but it was not known by whom: the doctors ordered the corpse to be taken up by some persons, and carried to the grave. As soon as

the bearers had raised it on their shoulders, they seemed seized with some sudden impulse, and ran to and fro, unable to stop themselves. At last, after having passed through a number of thorns and prickly bushes unhurt, the corpse fell from them close to a house, and defaced it in the fall; and the owner being taken up, he immediately confessed the poisoning.

The natives are extremely cautious about poison. When they buy any eatable, the seller kisses it all round before the buyer, to shew him it is not poisoned; and the same is done when any meat or drink is presented, particularly to a stranger. We have serpents of different kinds, some of which are esteemed ominous when they appear in our houses, and these we never molest. I remember two of those ominous snakes, each of which was as thick as the calf of a man's leg, and in colour resembling a dolphin in the water, crept at different times into my mother's night-house, where I always lay with her, and coiled themselves into folds, and each time they crowed like a cock. I was desired by some of our wise men to touch these, that I might be interested in the good omens, which I did, for they are quite harmless, and would tamely suffer themselves to be handled; and then they were put into a large open earthen pan, and set on one side of the high way. Some of our snakes, however, were poisonous. One of them crossed the road one day as I was standing on it, and passed between my feet, without offering to touch me, to the great surprise of many who saw it; and these incidents were accounted, by the wise men, and likewise by my mother and the rest of the people, as remarkable omens in my favour.

Such is the imperfect sketch my memory has furnished me with of the manners and customs of a people among whom I first drew my breath. And here I cannot forbear suggesting what has long struck me very forcibly, namely, the strong analogy which even by this sketch, imperfect as it is, appears to prevail in the manners and customs of my countrymen, and those of the Jews, before they reached the Land of Promise, and particularly the patriarchs, while they were yet in that pastoral state which is described in Genesis—an analogy which alone would induce me to think that the one people had sprung from the other. . . .

NORRIS. *The Oyo Empire and Dahomey: 1730's and 1740's*¹

. . . To the north-east of *Dahomy* lies a fine, fertile, and extensive country, inhabited by a great, and warlike people, called the *Eyoës* [Oyos]; the scourge and terror of all their neighbours. These *Eyoës* are governed by a King, but not by one so absolute as the tyrant of *Dahomy*. If what report says of him be true, when his ill conduct gives just offence to his people, a deputation from them wait upon him, it is said, and represent to him, that the burden of government has been so fatiguing, that it is full time for him to repose from his cares, and to indulge himself with a little sleep.² He thanks his people for their attention to his ease, retires to his apartment as if to sleep, where he gives directions to his women to strangle him; which is immediately executed, and his son quietly succeeds him, upon the same terms of holding the government no longer than his conduct merits the approbation of his people.

The *Dahomans*, to give an idea of the strength of an *Eyoë* army, assert, that when they go to war, the general spreads the hide of a buffaloe before the door of his tent, and pitches a spear in the ground, on each side of it; between which the soldiers march, until the multitude, which pass over the hide, have worn an hole through it; as soon as this happens, he presumes that his forces are numerous enough to take the field. The *Dahomans* may possibly exaggerate, but the *Eyoës* are certainly a very populous, warlike and powerful nation.

They invaded *Dahomy* in 1738 with an irresistible army, and laid the country waste with fire and sword to the gates of *Abomey*; here, the *Foys* [Fon] had collected their whole strength, and waited the arrival of the enemy, who were advancing with an incredible multitude.

The *Foys*, though inferior in numbers, were not intimidated;

¹ From Robert Norris, *Memoirs of the Reign of Bossa Ahadee King of Dahomy*, London, 1789, pp. 11–16. Robert Norris actually wrote his memoirs in 1773, a year before the death of King 'Bossa Ahadee' [Tegbesu], who reigned from 1727 to 1774/5.

² Dalzell (*History of Dahomey*, pp. 12–13) gives a similar account of the process of dethroning, adding that the deputation brings with it 'a present of parrot's eggs, as a mark of its authenticity'.

they had seen service under *Trudo*,¹ but never was their valour called forth upon a more trying occasion: their country, and every thing that was dear to them, lay at stake; and they did all that could be expected in the defence. The enemy attacked them in the morning; they acted wonders on that day; twice they repulsed the *Eyoës*, and had nearly given them a total defeat; but fresh supplies of the enemy continually pouring in, to replace those who fell, the *Foys*, worn out with fatigue, were obliged to yield at last to superior numbers and retreated, under cover of the night, into *Abomey*: having killed of the *Eyoës*, above twice the number of their own army. Their situation now became truly calamitous, and no prospect was before them, but an utter extinction of the *Dahomy* name and nation.

Abomey is a very large town, surrounded with a deep moat, but has no wall nor breast-work to defend the besieged; nor are there any springs of water in it; consequently, it could not long be tenable. The first care of the *Dahomans* on the night after the battle, whilst the *Eyoës* were too much fatigued to interrupt them, was, to send away the wounded, and the women and children, to *Zassa*, a town about twenty-five miles off, where the King then was; who when he learned the unfortunate issue of the day, was immediately conveyed, with his women and treasures, to an inaccessible retreat, about four hours journey from *Zassa*. . . .

Agaow, the King's general at *Abomey*, continued to defend the place, and amuse the enemy, until he learned that the King was safe, and *Zassa* evacuated: he then took advantage of the dark night, conducted the remains of his army safe, passed the enemy, and fled; leaving the town to the mercy of the *Eyoës*, who afterwards plundered and burnt it, as they also did *Calonina* and *Zassa*: they lived in the country at discretion, as long as they could procure subsistence; and in a few months, when that grew scarce, returned to their own country. Had they, when they engaged at *Abomey*, detached a part of their numerous army, and attacked *Zassa* at the same time, the King and all his treasure must inevitably have fallen into their

¹ 'Guadja Trudo' (Agaja), Bossa Ahadee's father and predecessor as King of Dahomey, reigned from 1708 to ?1727. (There are slight discrepancies in the dates given for the reigns of the eighteenth-century Kings of Dahomey. The dates given here are Burton's: Norris gives 1731/2 for the end of Agaja's reign and the beginning of Tegbesu's. See Melville Herskovits, *Dahomey*, New York, 1938, i, p. 13.)

hands: and for this neglect, their general was disgraced on his return.

The *Eyoës* continued for several years, to harrass *Dahomy* with an annual visit; the *Foys* never thought it prudent to engage them afterwards; but when apprized of their coming, used to evacuate their towns, divide into small parties, and shelter themselves as well as they could in their fastnesses and woods. The King used all his efforts to obtain an accommodation, and offered them any reasonable compensation to refrain from hostilities; but it was difficult to satisfy their demands. They claimed, in consequence of an old treaty, an annual tribute; the payment of which had been omitted in the prosperous days of *Trudo*. These arrears were considerable; and fresh demands were also added, on account of the conquest of *Whydah*,¹ which the *Eyoës* looked upon as an inexhaustible source of wealth to the King. Their expectations, upon the whole, were so exorbitant, that *Ahadee* found it impracticable to satisfy them; and the *Eyoës* continued to ravage the country for several years, burning their towns, destroying their crops in harvest, killing many people, and carrying numbers away into captivity. In the year 1747, however, the *Eyoës* consented to an accommodation, and compromised the matter for a tribute, which is paid them annually at *Calonina*, in the month of November.

ABSON · *The Oyo Empire and Dahomey: 1770's and 1780's*²

1774. . . . About the time of Adahoonzou's³ accession, the ministers of the King of Eyeo [Oyo], being tired of his government, had attempted, as had been their usual practice, to depose their monarch. . . . But this Prince had the good sense

¹ 'Ouidah' on modern maps, major eighteenth-century slaving port, conquered by Dahomey in 1727–9 (see Fage, *History of West Africa*, pp. 93–94).

² From Archibald Dalzell, Governor at Cape Coast Castle, *The History of Dahomy, an Inland Kingdom of Africa*, London, 1793, part iii, *The Life of Adahoonzou II*, pp. 156–8 and 173–5. This section of Dalzell's book is described in the Preface (pp. vi–vii) as 'collected from the communications of Lionel Abson, Esq., the present British Governor at Whydah', who had spent 'seven and twenty years resident on the coast, and upwards of twenty in the present government . . . '.

³ Adahoonzou II, or Mpengula (Kpengle), reigned from 1774/5 to 1789. See M. Herskovits, *Dahomey*, 1938, i, p. 13.

to despise, and the fortitude to resist, such a ridiculous custom. He, therefore, peremptorily refused the parrot's eggs, which had been offered for his acceptance: telling his ministers that he had as yet no inclination to take a *nap*, but that he was resolved to *watch* for the benefit of his people.

The ministers were extremely disappointed and astonished at this unexpected contempt of a political custom, the abolition of which must destroy their power; they endeavoured, therefore, to effect by force, what they could not accomplish by their stale trick. *Ochenoo*, the prime minister, put himself at the head of the rebel party, which, though formidable, was soon defeated by the adherents of the Sovereign, with great slaughter. *Ochenoo* himself, with all his numerous family, were put to death by the victors. . . . Thus, by his spirited conduct, the King of Eyeo emancipated himself from the tyranny of his ministers, and established a remarkable precedent to direct his successors on similar occasions.

Upon the re-establishment of his authority, after this event, Adahoonzou sent an embassy of congratulation to the King of Eyeo, who bestowed upon him the following proverbial surname: *Yee ma sa hoo beate cosru gloh; an elephant cannot shelter himself under the swish-pots*: intimating, it should seem, that it was as difficult to conceal the accomplishments of Adahoonzou, as to hide an elephant in so small a space. This appellation was proclaimed, for two months, in all the market-places of Dahomy, and in the different adjacent friendly towns. . . .

1781. . . . The death of the old Mayhou¹ . . . made some stir in Dahomy. . . . The Eyeo ambassadors. . . who happened to be in Dahomy, at the time of his death, thought this a good opportunity to increase the amount of the annual tribute which they had been sent to receive. They made a demand for one hundred of the Mayhou's women, which Adahoonzou endeavoured to elude; but they insisted on his compliance, and, in peremptory terms, refused to return without them. The King, however reluctantly, was obliged to give them some of the women, in order to get rid of them.

Tributary states can never satisfy the avarice of the powers from whom they have been obliged to purchase peace by such

¹ The 'Mayhou' [Meú] was second in rank of the king's officials (Herskovits, op. cit., i, p. 19).

a disgraceful acknowledgement. Three months after the departure of his ambassadors, a messenger arrived from the King of Eyeo, with a demand for the rest of the Mayhou's women; accompanied with a threat, that, in case of non-compliance on the part of Dahomy, the Eyeo general *Banchenoo* should be sent to fetch them. . . .

ADAMS · *The Oyo Empire: Lagos*¹

Outside and parallel with the wall, at the north-west extremity of the town [of Ardrah], is the road which leads to Hio [Oyo], a country of great extent, and inhabited by a powerful and warlike nation; the capital of which, according to the natives' account, lies about NNE from Ardrah, at the distance of nine days' journey, or 180 miles, allowing a traveller to proceed at the rate of twenty miles a day.²

To the King of Hio the Ardrah people pay tribute, as he protects them from the incursions of the Dahomians, whose King has always been very jealous of their rivalry in trade. . . .

The Hios are a fine race of people, and are well skilled both in agriculture and in manufacturing articles for domestic purposes. The country which they inhabit is . . . bordered on the north-east by Housa, on the south-west by Dahomy, and the influence of its government extends to the south as far as the sea by way of Ardrah.

If we are to believe the accounts of the natives, the King of Hio has an organised army amounting to 100,000 men, composed of infantry, and cavalry; but the natives of Africa are so prone to exaggerate every circumstance connected with the nation to which they individually belong, that it is very difficult to ascertain the truth, particularly as connected with the population of a town, the numerical force of an army, or the extent of a kingdom.

I heard of but one white man, who had ever been at the

¹ From Captain John Adams, *Remarks on the Country extending from Cape Palmas to the River Congo*, London, 1823, pp. 78–79 and 92–108. This work is an expanded and popularized version of his earlier book, *Sketches taken during Ten Voyages to Africa between the Years 1786 and 1800*, London, 1822.

² Approximately correct; the actual distance from Ardra to Old Oyo is rather over 200 miles.

capital of Hio, and he was a French officer belonging to a slave ship.¹ He certainly stated the population to be considerable, but by no means equal to what he had been taught to expect; and the army, as an African army, as far as he could judge, he thought to be a tolerably efficient one. A part of it was martialled before him, and he strongly suspected that several of the corps were passed in review more than once, as corps which he had not before seen. . . .

He was treated by the King while in Hio with great distinction, although he thought himself closely watched. . . .

The cloth manufactured in Hio is superior, both for variety of pattern, color, and dimensions, to any made in the neighbouring states; and some of the articles wrought by them in iron exhibit much skill and ingenuity. It surprised me to find the Hio women as well as those of Housa acquainted with the taste of cheese, as well as with the mode of making it, which they described, and which left no doubt in my mind that it was an article of domestic consumption in those countries.

The Hios are extremely black and muscular, and generally above the middle size; in disposition they are mild, docile, and submissive. Their country mark on the face consists of three short cuts, each about one and a half inches long, running obliquely on each side of the mouth. . . .

The town of Badagry,² where considerable trade has been carried on by the slave dealers, is placed within three miles of the sea on the north bank of the lake or river that descends from Ardrah to Lagos, and is nearly equi-distant from those places. Its trade at one period was very extensive, for the customs exacted there were trifling both as it respected the inland traders and Europeans, which caused many of them to give it a preference to Lagos, as a trading station, where the duties were exorbitant. It was also more conveniently situated for communicating with the shipping than Ardrah, and began to absorb a large part of the trade of both places. But unfortunately it had not power to protect itself from the jealousy of those rival trading towns, who conspired its ruin, and soon effected

¹ Assuming that John Adams was correctly informed, Clapperton and Lander were not, as is often stated, the first Europeans to penetrate Oyo territories.

² Until displaced by Lagos in the mid-nineteenth century, Badagry was the main port serving the Oyo hinterland.

it, by attacking it with a powerful army and despoiling its inhabitants of all their property.

The town of Lagos is built on a bank or island, which appears to have been raised from Cradoo lake, by the eddies, after the sea and periodical rains had broken down the boundary which separated it from the ocean. The island is of inconsiderable size, about four miles from the sea, and a foot only above the level of the lake at high water, which is so shallow that boats of only ten or fifteen tons burden can approach the town. An active traffic in slaves was carried on at this place, particularly after Ardrah was deserted by the French traders.

It has always been the policy of the Lagos people, like those of Bonny, to be themselves the traders and not brokers. They therefore go in their canoes to Ardrah and Badagry, and to the towns situated at the NE extremity of Cradoo lake, where they purchase slaves, Jaboo [Ijebu] cloth, and such articles as are required for domestic consumption.

The necessities of life are here extremely abundant and cheap, and are brought chiefly from the country or northern margin of Cradoo lake, which communicates with Jaboo, a very fertile kingdom, and inhabited by an agricultural and manufacturing people.

It is these people who send so much cloth to Lagos and Ardrah, which the Portuguese traders from the Brazils purchase for that market, and which is held there in much estimation by the black population. . . .

The horrid custom of impaling alive a young female, to propitiate the favour of the goddess presiding over the rainy season, that she may fill the horn of plenty, is practised here annually. The immolation of this victim to superstitious usage takes place soon after the vernal equinox. . . . Females destined to be thus destroyed, are brought up in the King's or caboceer's seraglio; and it is said, that their minds have previously been so powerfully wrought on by the fetiche men, that they proceed to the place of execution with as much cheerfulness as those infatuated Hindoo women who are burnt with their husbands. . . .

Male dogs are banished to the towns opposite Lagos; for if any are caught there, they are immediately strangled, split, and trimmed like sheep, and hung up at the door of some great man, where rows of the putrid carcases of their canine brethren are

often to be seen. They are fetiche, and intended to countervail the machinations of the evil spirit.

At the eastern extremity of the town, there are a few large trees, which are covered with the heads of malefactors. The skulls are nailed to the trunks and large limbs, and present a very appalling spectacle. . . .

The population of the town of Lagos may amount to 5,000; but there are two or three populous villages on the north side of Cradoo lake, over which the caboceer of Lagos has jurisdiction. This chief's power is absolute and his disposition tyrannical to excess; his name is Cootry [Ologun Kutere].

When I first paid him a visit he was holding a levée. . . . The entrance to the audience-chamber presented a very curious spectacle. It was an oblong room of considerable length, having an opening along the centre of the roof to admit the light and air. At one extremity there was arranged the King's fetiche, which consisted of three elephant's teeth placed in a reclining posture against the wall, with the convex part outwards, and sprinkled with blood. On each side of the apartment, there were tumbled together, promiscuously, articles of trade, and costly presents, in a state of dilapidation; namely, rolls of tobacco, boxes of pipes, cases of gin, ankers of brandy, pieces of cloth, of Indian and European manufacture, iron bars, earthenware, a beautiful hand-organ, the bellows of which were burst, two elegant chairs of state, having rich crimson damask covers, all in tatters; a handsome sedan chair, without a bottom; and two expensive sofas, without legs. These, I presume, were placed thus conspicuously with a view to impress the minds of those persons who were permitted to approach the royal presence, with ideas of the wealth and grandeur of his sable Majesty; and politically, might perhaps be considered as something similar to the pageantry with which it is thought necessary to surround royalty in civilized countries, and which have so captivating and imposing effect on the unthinking and vulgar. . . .

On interrogating Occondo, the King's favourite and linguist, respecting the elephant's teeth, and why they were Cootry's fetiche, his answer was, that the elephant being more sagacious and stronger than any other animal, he represented best (metaphorically, of course) Cootry's power over his subjects. If the black monarch had been acquainted with heraldry, it

would be a reasonable inference to draw, that his fetiche was in reality his coat of arms. . . .

The policy of this African despot, in ordering the devil to pay his metropolis an occasional visit, is by no means a weak stratagem. . . . His [the devil's] avocation is to run through the different avenues of the town disguised in a mask, and to destroy all who may chance to fall in his way; but as notice is given by the Gong Gong, or bellman, of his intended nocturnal visit, it is but seldom any person loses his life. Europeans receive notice, and are requested not to leave their houses on the evening of his appearance, as the devil in Lagos is no respecter of persons. The fellow who performs the part comes from one of the villages on the opposite side of the lake; and the inhabitants of Lagos are certainly much alarmed at his visits, and inquire from their neighbours, the following morning, in whispers how they fared during the night.

Besides the public warning usually given on such occasions, the devil always makes his appearance at full moon; so that if the King should be out raking, he may not mistake his royal master for a subject, although it would be a favourable opportunity to rid the people of a tyrant. . . .

A D A M S · *Benin in Decline*¹

. . . The town is large and populous, and contains probably 15,000 inhabitants; it is built very irregularly, the houses being placed without regard to order, and detached; consequently occupying a large space of ground.

The King of Benin is fetiche, and the principal object of adoration in his Dominions. He occupies a higher post here than the pope does in catholic Europe; for he is not only God's viceregent upon earth, but a god himself, whose subjects both obey and adore him as such, although I believe their adoration to arise from fear rather than love; as cases of heresy are tried before a much more summary, though a more merciful, tribunal than the inquisition, that abominable engine of

¹ This, and the three following passages, are also taken from John Adams, *Remarks on the Country extending from Cape Palmas to the River Congo*, London, 1823, pp. 111–44. See the foregoing extract.

catholic despotism. For delinquency, if proved in the former instance, is punished promptly by the delinquent receiving the *coup de tête*, which terminates instantly both his life and his sufferings. . . .

King Bowarré, who is now about forty-five years of age . . . received me with much politeness. . . . Trade was the principal, indeed the only subject discussed; for King Bowarré, although he is both a god and a king, trades, nevertheless, in slaves and ivory. . . .

There are in Benin a number of itinerant dancing-women, who were sent to amuse me, and whose performance before the house constantly attracted a crowd of persons of both sexes, who conducted themselves with great decorum during the exhibition. The ladies danced in the fandango style, perhaps not quite so modestly as our fashionable belles, although more in character, by holding in their hands excellent substitutes for castanets, with which they kept time admirably. These consisted of small hollow gourds, over which are spread nets having small pease strung on the sides of the meshes. . . .

The King and his principal courtiers are ostentatious in their dress, wearing damask, taffity, and cuttanee,¹ after the country fashion. Coral is a very favourite ornament in the royal seraglio, which is always well filled; and the women, like those of the Heebo [Ibo] nation, wear a profusion of beads, if they can by any means obtain them.

Human sacrifices are not so frequent here as in some parts of Africa; yet besides those performed on the death of great men, three or four are annually sacrificed at the mouth of the river, as votive offerings to the sea, to direct vessels to bind their course to this horrid climate.

The number of slaves obtained at Benin was at one period very considerable; but the extreme unhealthiness of the country was, I apprehend, the chief cause why the English trade at this place declined. The medium of exchange is salt, and calculations are made in pawns,² one of which is equal to a bar in Bonny, or 2s. 6d. sterling. . . .

¹ 'Cuttanee', fine linen from the East Indies (*O.E.D.*).

² 'A fictional unit of valuation'; see G. I. Jones, in *Africa*, xxviii. 1, pp. 49–50.



Reception of the Denham-Clapperton Mission by the Sultan of Bornu

From *Narrative of Travels and Discoveries in Northern and Central Africa,*
Major Dixon Denham and Captain Hugh Clapperton

PLATE 8



Ibadan, 1854

From *Seven Years in Yorubaland*, Anna Hinderer

ADAMS · *Warri: Portuguese-Catholic Survivals*

. . . This town is situated on a beautiful island, about five miles in circumference, and which might have fallen from the clouds in the midst of a desert; for it is a little elevated above the surrounding country, . . . is well cultivated, and has the appearance of an extensive park. . . .

Much trade is carried on here with the natives of Bonny and New Calabar, who come in their canoes for that purpose; and the slaves obtained by them are principally composed of the natives of Allakoo, who are called at Bonny the brass country negroes, from the circumstance of the neptunes, or large brass pans, taken from Europe to Bonny, being requisite for this particular trade. These neptunes are used, during the dry season, by the Creek and surrounding country people, for the purpose of evaporating sea-water to obtain its salt. . . .

The King, whose name is Otoo, appeared about sixty years of age, his countenance mild and intelligent, and his person of the middle size, inclined to corpulency. He had on a white satin waistcoat trimmed with silver lace, a silk purple coat much embroidered, black satin small-clothes with knee buckles, coarse thread stockings, shoes and buckles, and a large black hat trimmed round the edge with red feathers; all of which appeared to us of Portuguese fabric, except the coat and waistcoat, which, there is little doubt, had, at a former period, been worn by some noble peer or knight at the court of St. James's. . . .

On entering the first apartment of the palace, we were much surprised to see, placed on a rude kind of table, several emblems of the catholic religion, consisting of crucifixes, mutilated saints, and other trumpery. Some of these articles were manufactured of brass, and others of wood. On inquiring how they came into their present situation we were informed that several black Portuguese missionaries had been at Warré, many years since, endeavouring to convert the natives into Christians;¹ and the building in which they performed their mysteries, we found still standing.

A large wooden cross, which had withstood the tooth of time, was remaining in a very perfect state, in one of the angles formed by two roads intersecting each other. We could not

¹ See Sect. V, pp. 131 and 138–40.

learn that the Portuguese had been successful in making proselytes; indeed, King Otoo's subjects appeared to trouble themselves very little about religion of any kind.

The government although monarchical, appeared to us mild; and, from the apparent equality and freedom that existed among the natives generally, to partake more of the republican form than the monarchical. . . .

A D A M S · *Bonny and the Slave-Trade*

This place is the wholesale market for slaves, as not fewer than 20,000 are annually sold here; 16,000 of whom are natives of one nation, called Heebo [Ibo], so that this single nation has not exported a less number of its people, during the last twenty years, than 320,000; and those of the same nation sold at New and Old Calabar, probably amounted in the same period of time to 50,000 more, making an aggregate amount of 370,000 Heebos. The remaining part of the above 20,000 is composed of the natives of the brass country, called Allakooz, and also of Ibbibbys [Ibibios] or Quaws [Ibibio Kwa].

Fairs, where the slaves of the Heebo nation are obtained, are held every five or six weeks at several villages, which are situated on the banks of the rivers and creeks in the interior, and to which the traders of Bonny resort to purchase them.

The preparation necessary for going to these fairs generally occupies the Bonny people some days. Large canoes, capable of carrying 120 persons, are launched and stored for the voyage. The traders augment the quantity of their merchandize, by obtaining from their friends, the captains of the slave ships, a considerable quantity of goods on credit, according to the extent of business they are in the habit of transacting. Evening is the period chosen for the time of departure, when they proceed in a body, accompanied by the noise of drums, horns, and gongs. At the expiration of the sixth day, they generally return, bringing with them 1,500 or 2,000 slaves, who are sold to Europeans the evening after their arrival, and taken on board the ships.

The Heebos, to judge by the immense number annually sent into slavery, inhabit a country of great extent, and extremely

populous, the southern boundary of which may be comprised between Cape Formosa and Old Calabar; and it is very probable that the towns at the mouths of the rivers along the coast, including New Calabar and Bonny, were peopled originally from the Heebo country; in fact, Amacree [Amakiri], the King of New Calabar, and Pepple, King of Bonny, are both of Heebo descent, as well as many of the principal traders at both these places.¹

These towns were probably first built and occupied for the purpose of obtaining salt by the evaporation of sea-water; because the country, from the sea-board to fifty miles into the interior of it, is a vast morass, heavily timbered, and unfit, without excessive labour, to produce sufficient food, but for a very scanty population; and as the trade in slaves increased, these towns, particularly Bonny, grew into importance. The language, also, spoken at these places varies but little from that spoken by the Heebos, which proves a common origin. . . .

The Heebos, in their persons, are tall and well formed, many of the women symmetrically so. . . . Their dispositions are naturally timid and desponding, and their despair on being sent on board of a ship is often such, that they use every stratagem to effect the commission of suicide. . . .

A class of Heebos, called Breeché,² and whom many have very erroneously considered to be a distinct nation, masters of slave-ships have always had a strong aversion to purchase; because the impression made on their minds, by their degraded situation, was rendered more galling and permanent from the exalted rank which they occupied in their own country. . . .

Breeché, in the Heebo language, signifies gentleman, or the eldest son of one, and who is not allowed to perform in his own country any menial office. He inherits, at his father's death, all his slaves, and has the absolute controul over the wives and children which he has left behind him. Before attaining the age of manhood, his forehead is scarified. . . .

It is expected, that every vessel, on her arrival, will fire a salute the instant the anchor is let go, as a compliment to the

¹ See Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta*, p. 29.

² C. K. Meek (*Law and Authority in a Nigerian Tribe*, Oxford, 1937, p. 7) suggests that 'Breeché' may be intended to refer to the titled class known as 'Ndichie', in the Onitsha region. Compare Sect. VI, p. 156.

black monarch who soon afterwards makes his appearance in a large canoe, at which time, all those natives who happen to be alongside of the vessel are compelled to proceed in their canoes to a respectful distance, and make way for his Majesty's barge. After a few compliments to the captain, he usually enquires after brother George (meaning the King of England), and hopes he and his family are well. He is not pleased unless he is regaled with the best the ship affords. . . . His power is absolute; and the surrounding country, to a considerable distance, is subject to his dominion. His war canoes are capable of carrying one hundred and forty persons each, and have often a gun of large calibre mounted on the bow. He has destroyed the town of New Calabar twice, and boasts of having eaten part of the heart of its king. His Jew Jew, or fetiche house, is ornamented with rows of the skulls of captives taken in battle.

New Calabar was formerly an independent State, and a number of vessels obtained at it cargoes of slaves; but at this time, the inhabitants are compelled to take their merchandize to Bonny for sale, yet are not permitted to have any communication whatever with the shipping. . . .

Some of the traders have become extremely opulent in consequence of the great extent to which the trade in slaves has been carried on by them, and are in possession of European articles to a considerable amount, especially unwrought iron and copper. There is so large a mass of the former accumulated in King Pepple's house, that it is supposed, to be buried as many feet under the ground as above it; viz. six or eight feet.

A trader here, named John Africa, and who has been several voyages to England, is endowed with an extraordinary memory. I have known him to have open running accounts with fourteen or fifteen vessels at the same time, wherein the debit sides exhibited long lists of various articles received by him at different periods on credit; yet, he could tell to a bunch of beads the exact state of each account when he came to settle it, although he could neither read nor write. . . .

I once observed this African bestow a valuable present on a captain, in so delicate a manner, as would have done honour to an European of refined sentiment. The captain was a great favourite of his; and the ship which he commanded, being on

the point of sailing, he went on board to take leave of him. Having done so, and got into his canoe, he dropped astern under the cabin port, and put through it, into the cabin, three elephant's teeth, weighing at least forty pounds each: he then called out to the captain, 'Da someting for buy your woman cloth,' (meaning his wife in England); and paddled away as fast as possible. . . .

ADAMS · *Education in Old Calabar*

The people of Old Calabar have, for a long period, dealt in the productions of the soil, as also in slaves; and have exported, annually, seven or eight hundred tons of palm oil, besides bar-wood. It is probable that their attention was first directed to the manufacture of palm oil, in large quantities, in consequence of Bonny becoming the great slave market, and monopolizing the trade in slaves, which Old Calabar carried on to a considerable extent before it; but which the chiefs of Old Calabar lost, by exacting from the vessels trading exorbitant duties or customs.

Many of the natives write English; an art first acquired by some of the traders' sons, who had visited England, and which they have had the sagacity to retain up to the present period. They have established schools and schoolmasters, for the purpose of instructing in this art the youths belonging to families of consequence.

ANTERA DUKE · *A Calabar Trader's Diary*¹

Original

22.2.1787

. . . about 5 am in aqua Landing with fog morning so wee walk up to see Willy Honesty so all old Egbo and I & Esim to meet for

¹ These are extracts, accompanied by a 'translation', from the diary of Antera Duke, a leading Calabar trader at the end of the eighteenth century, published in Daryll Forde, *Efik Traders of Old Calabar*, London, International African Institute, 1956, pp. 104–6 (original) and 54–55 ('translation'). The diary was written in the local form of pidgin English, which Professor Daryll Forde describes as a 'trade language', developed at Old Calabar and other trading centres of the Oil Rivers, 'through intercourse with English traders and seamen' — 'a jargon which was mainly

Egbo plaver house to know what man be old Callabar Egbo so all Egbo men find one Ephrim aqua son no be Town Egbo and one Robin Henshaw son and Henshaw Robin Henshaw so all old & new Egbo brow for them to not be Egbo men and after 8 clock night I & Esim Did carry 1 jug 2 Long Case whit Bottle Brandy 1 Larg Jar mimbo up to Egbo house for give all old & new Egbo to Drink and Back 2 clock night

26.2.1787

... at 8 clock night wee have see Long King aqua send one his genllmen to be killd by wee hand so wee send that genllmen by Long Duk for River to be killd

3.3.1787

about 5 wee go on bord Captin Fairwether for tak Ephrim aqua & Ephrim coomy and Coffee & Arshbong coomy and wee com ashor with all captin so everry ship firs guns so one great guns com up and cutt one Captin Tatam whit men head off

17.3.1787

... so wee have Eyo & Ebetim & Eshen com with Egbo to ogan poor Boy Egbo plaver so all mak his pay 335 copper and one house Boy to Egbo Cutt head of soon after we have them again hom

24.3.1787

... at 12 clock time wee have Willy Honesty call all genllmen for meet in Egbo Cobham Cobin for know who wee will giv King of Old Calabar and after 7 clock night wee have all us town genllmen meet for Coffee Cobin to settle every Bad bob we was mak sinc wee father Dead so wee kild 2 goat

13.4.1787

... wee have chop in Egbo Young house wee see all Henshaw family com to see for ask us family for now to Let the know who wee will mak be King Egbo so wee say wee Don know befor wee settle about King of Callabar first

English in vocabulary although the constructions were often modelled on those of Ibibio' (op. cit., p. viii). The original diary, in the library of the United Presbyterian Church offices in Edinburgh, was probably destroyed by bombing during the last war, but certain extracts, covering the years 1785-8, had been copied and preserved. (For brief explanatory notes, see the 'translation'.)

16.4.1787

... wee go to Creek Town 2 good canow & 1 small Dutto to mak the guin company & old town about the 2 town want pay Egbo in one Day so wee say never Been hear that for weir grandy grandy father so willy killd goat for wee and I walk to Henshaw town for see my mimbo wife and com hom in 2 clock noon

18.4.1787

... wee have Otto ephrim and willy Tom Robin com to ask wee if wee will to the pay first or the guin company first so wee say wee will for the be first and I have send my cobin for mimbo market

28.4.1787

about 5 I Lig in Bud so I have see Coffee Duke com to me and mak my Cobin Boy call me to him so his Did tell me abou amnaty [manatee] be killed in King Aqua Landing so I did mak 7 hand go with Jimimy Antera to fetch in aqua River so wee have been drink all Day to my girl wife in Duke sister Daught house

'Translation'

22.2.1787

... about 5 a.m. at Aqua Landing, with some morning fog. So we walked up to see Willy Honesty.¹ All the old Ekpe² and I and Esim met at the Ekpe palaver house to decide who is to be Old Calabar Ekpe. All the Ekpe men decide that Ephraim Aqua's son is not the town Ekpe, and neither is Robin Henshaw's son nor Henshaw Robin Henshaw. So all the old and new Ekpe blew for them not to be Ekpe men and after 8 o'clock at night I and Esim carried one jug, 2 long cases of white bottled brandy, 1 large jar of mimbo³ up to the Ekpe house to give to all the old and new Ekpe to drink, and came back at 2 o'clock at night.

¹ Willy Honesty, 'The renowned Efik warrior-chieftain Eyo Nsa of Creek Town, who died in 1820 . . .'. He 'obtained his European name through scrupulous fairness in his trading with Europeans' (Daryll Forde, op. cit., p. 67).

² On the organization and functions of the secret society known as *Ekpe* ('Egbo'), the main institution through which the Calabar merchant oligarchy exercised power at this period, and through the nineteenth century, see G. I. Jones, in Daryll Forde, op. cit., pp. 135–48, and K. O. Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta*, Oxford, 1956, pp. 33–34. See also Sect. VIII, p. 301. To 'blow Ekpe' means to impose Ekpe sanctions.

³ Mimbo, 'the juice obtained by tapping the wine-palm tree' (Daryll Forde, op. cit., p. 71).

26.2.1787

. . . at 8 o'clock at night Long King Aqua sent one of his gentlemen to be killed by our hands so we sent that gentleman by Long Duke to the river to be killed.

3.3.1787

About 5 we went on board Captain Fairweather to take comey¹ for Ephraim Aqua and Ephraim, and Coffee and Archibong, and we came ashore with all the Captains. Then every ship fired guns. One gun came up and cut one of Captain's Tatam's white men's head off.

17.3.1787

. . . so Eyo and Ebetim and Esin came with Ekpe to Hogan about the business of a poor boy for Ekpe. So all made him pay 335 coppers and give one house-boy to Ekpe for his head to be cut off.² Soon after they came home again.

24.3.1787

. . . at 12 o'clock Willy Honesty called all the gentlemen to meet in Egbo Cobham's cabin to decide who we will make King of Old Calabar, and after 7 o'clock at night all of us town gentlemen met at Coffee's cabin to settle every bad quarrel we had had since our father died. So we killed 2 goats.

13.4.1787

. . . we had chop in Egbo Young's house. We saw all the Henshaw family coming to ask our family to let them know who we will make King Ekpe.³ So we said we don't know as we first must settle about the King of Calabar.

16.4.1787

. . . we went to Creek Town in 2 good canoes and one small one to meet (?) the Guinea Company and Old Town about the two towns wanting to pay Ekpe in one day. So we said we had never heard that since our great-grandfather's time. So Willy

¹ 'Comey', the duty paid by European ships to Efik chiefs for the privilege of trading (Darryl Forde, op. cit., p. 6).

² 'A free-born man who committed an action which the Ekpe Society judged punishable with death could substitute a slave for decapitation' (*ibid.*, p. 77).

³ Presumably a reference to the headship of one of the Ekpe Society grades.

killed a goat for us and I walked to Henshaw town to see my mimbo wife¹ and came home at 2 o'clock after noon.

18.4.1787

. . . Otto Ephraim and Willy Tom Robin came to ask us if we will pay them first or the Guinea Company first. We say we will pay them first; I have sent my cabin (boy) to the mimbo market.

28.4.1787

About 5 a.m. I was lying in bed. I saw Coffee Duke come to me and make my cabin boy call me to him. So he told me about a manatee² being killed in King Aqua landing. So I made 7 hands go with Jimmy Antera to fetch it into Aqua river. So we drank all day to my girl-wife in Duke's sister's daughter's house.

S H A B E E N Y · *A Moroccan in Hausaland*³

Housa

Housa is south-east of Timbuctoo, a much larger city and nearly as large as London. He [Shabeeny] lived there two years, but never saw the whole of it. It has no walls; the houses are like those of Timbuctoo, and form irregular lanes or streets like those of Fas [Fez] or Marocco [Marrakesh], wide enough for camels to pass with their loads. The palace is much larger than that of Timbuctoo, it is seven or eight miles in circumference and surrounded by a wall. He remembers but four gates, but there may be more. He thinks the number of guards at each gate is about 50. It is in that part of the town most distant from the Nile. The houses are dark-coloured and flat-roofed.

¹ i.e. 'one of [Antera Duke's] wives who lived on a small farm and looked after his wine-palm trees' (loc. cit.).

² 'The manatee is sacred to the Ekpe Society' (loc. cit.).

³ From El Hage Abd Salam Shabeeny, *An Account of Timbuctoo and Housa*, ed. J. G. Jackson, London, 1820. Shabeeny, according to Jackson, was a Moroccan from Tetuan, who accompanied his father on an extended commercial journey to Timbuctu and Hausaland, visiting the latter in about 1787, at the age of seventeen. In 1795 Shabeeny was captured by Russians while returning from a trading visit to Hamburg 'to purchase linens and other merchandize', was set ashore at Dover, and stayed for a time in England, where he related this account of Hausaland to Jackson. While obviously not a very reliable source, Shabeeny is interesting as one of the few visitors to Hausaland during the latter part of the eighteenth century, before the Fulani *jihād*, who have left any kind of record.

Government

If the king has children, the eldest, if a man of sense and good character, succeeds; otherwise, one of the others is elected. The grandees of the court are the electors. If the eldest son be not approved, they are not bound to elect him; he has, however, the preference, and after him the other sons. But the choice of the council must be unanimous; and if no person of the royal line be the object of their choice, they may elect one of their own body. The members of the council are appointed by the king; he chooses them for their wisdom and integrity, without being limited to rank. The person appointed cannot refuse obedience to the royal mandate. The council consists of many hundreds. The governor who controls the police lives in the centre of the town.

The Administration of Justice

Is very similar to that of Timbuctoo, except that the king is perfectly despotic; and though he consults his council, he decides as he thinks proper. The governor administers justice in small affairs; but, in important cases, he refers the parties to the king and council, of which he is himself a member. No torture is ever inflicted. The governor employs a great number of officers of police at a distance from the town. If robberies are committed, the person robbed must apply to the chief of the district, who must fine or take into custody the offender, or becomes himself liable to make compensation for the injury sustained.

Landed Property

... There is a plant resembling a large onion, which serves as a land-mark. If these are removed (which cannot be easily done without discovery), reference is had to the records of the sale, of which every owner is in possession. They express the sum received; the quantity, situation, and limits of the land. These are given by the seller, and are written in the language and character of the country, very different from the Arabic. The same letters are used at Timbuctoo. They write from right to left. The character was perfectly unintelligible to Shabeeny....

Army

He cannot precisely tell the number of troops, but believes the king can raise 70,000 to 80,000 horse, and 100,000 foot. The horses are poor and small, except a few kept for the king's own use. He has no well-bred mares. Their arms are the same as at Timbuctoo; the muskets, which are matchlocks, are made in the country. They are very dexterous in throwing the lance. Gunpowder is also manufactured there; the brimstone is brought from Fas; the charcoal they make, and he believes they prepare the nitre. Their arrows are feathered and barbed; the bows are all cross-bows, with triggers; the arrows, 20 to 40 in a quiver, are made of hides, and hang on the left side. The king never goes to war in person. The soldiers have a peculiar dress; their heads are bare, but the officers have a kind of turban. The soldiers have a shirt of coarse white cotton, and yellow slippers; those of the officers are red. Some have turbans adorned with gold. They carry their powder in a leather purse; the match, made of cotton, is wound round the gun. They have flint and steel in a pouch, and also spare matches.

The Trade

Is similar to that of Timbuctoo. In both places foreign merchants always employ agents, or brokers, to trade to advantage; a man should reside some time before he begins. Ivory is sold by the tooth. He bought one, weighing 200 lb., for five ducats (£1.5); he sold it in Marocco for 25 ducats per 100 lb; it is now (1795) worth 60. The king cannot make any of his subjects slaves. They get their cotton from Bengala. They have no salt; it comes from a great distance, and is very dear. Goods find a much better market at Housa than at Timbuctoo. There are merchants at Housa from Timbuctoo, Bornoo, Moshu, and India; the travelling merchants do not regard distance. From Timbuctoo and other great towns he has heard, and from his own knowledge can venture to assert, that they bring East India goods. Gold-dust, ivory, and slaves are the principal returns from Housa. . . .

Religion

The same as at Timbuctoo. The poorer classes, as in most countries, have many superstitious notions of spirits, good and

bad; and are alarmed by dreams, particularly the slaves, some of whom cannot retain their urine in the night, as he thinks, from fear of spirits. They take them (i.e. the slaves) often upon trial when they buy them and if they have this defect, a considerable deduction is made in the price. A man possessed by a good spirit is supposed to be safe amidst 10,000 shot. A man guilty of a crime, who in the opinion of the judge is possessed by an evil spirit, is not punished. He never heard of a rich man being possessed.

Dress

Like that of Timbuctoo, their turbans are of the finest muslin. The sleeves of the soldiers are small, those of the merchants wide. The former have short breeches, the latter long. The officers dress like the merchants, each according to his circumstances. The caftan is of silk, in summer, brought from India. Instead of the silk cords worn by the king of Timbuctoo, the king of Housa wears two silk sashes, three fingers broad, one on each shoulder; they are richly adorned with gold. In one hangs his dagger; and, when he rides out, his sword in the other. He wears not the silk pear in his turban, as does the king of Timbuctoo. The front of his turban is embroidered with gold.

'ABDULLĀH DAN FODIO · *The Intellectual Background to the Fulani Jihād*'¹

Now the needy of God, 'Abdullāh ibn Muḥammad says: It occurred to my heart that I should record in writing the shaikhs from whom I acquired knowledge and by whom I profited, in order to make them known. . . .

And the first of them was my father from whom I learnt the Qur'ān. He was Muḥammad, and his nickname was Fūdī. . . . Its meaning in our language is 'one learned in the law'. . . .

. . . Musa [Jukullu, my father's ancestor] . . . came with our

¹ From 'Abdullāh ibn [dan] Fodio, '*Idā' al-nusūkh man 'akhadhtu 'anhu min al-shuyūkh*' ('The repository of texts—those of the Shaikhs from whom I took knowledge'), published, with translation and commentary, by M. Hiskett, in *The Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, xix, 1957, pp. 550–78, under the title 'Material relating to the State of Learning among the Fulani before their *Jihād*'. 'Abdullāh dan Fodio (c. 1766 to 1828) was the younger brother of 'Uthmān dan Fodio (see below, Sect. VII, p. 191). This autobiographical note was composed in 1812 for Fātimā, daughter of Sultan Muḥammad Bello, i.e. for 'Abdullāh's great-niece, but the period to which it refers is approximately 1780–90.

tribe from the country of the west, which is Futa Tura,¹ according to what we have heard, and he was one of their chief men until he came with them to the country of Kunni, and they were the first who lived in it before the Hausas and the Tuareg, until subsequently they spread through the country of the Hausas. They were the origin of the tribe of the Fulani, and their language was the language of the Fulani, . . . and their origin, according to what we have heard, is from the Christians of Rūm,² to whom came the armies of the Ṣahāba.³ . . .

Now among the shaikhs from whom I acquired knowledge was the Commander of the Believers, my uterine brother 'Uthmān ibn Muḥammad. . . . Now the virtues of this Commander of the Believers are well-known, horsemen having brought them from the east and west, and we will not cause tedium by mentioning them. My father left me in his hands after the reading of the Qur'ān, and I was at that time 13 years of age. I read with him *al-Ishrīnīyāt*, *al-Witrīyāt*, and the Six Poets,⁴ and I learned from him the science of the Unity⁵ from the Sanūsī books and their commentaries, and from other works. It was rarely that a book on the science of the Unity reached our country, and I knew of it, and did not copy it down from him. I learnt from him syntax. . . . I learned from him also the knowledge of mysticism which belongs to the forming of good character in oneself and that which belongs to perfecting oneself in science, such as made me independent, if God wills, of other than him. I received from him certain books on law, from which were to be learnt what is obligatory on the individual. . . . I learnt from him Qur'anic exegesis from the beginning of *al-Fātiḥa* to the end of the Qur'ān, more times than I can tell. I learnt from him the science of tradition which comes by knowledge, such as al-'Irāqi, and that which comes by oral tradition, such as al-Bukhārī⁶ which trained me for [the study of] other works. I learnt from him also the science of arithmetic, the elementary [part] of it, the easy [part], and by the praise of

¹ Futa Toro, in Senegal.

² The Byzantine Empire.

³ The Companions of the Prophet.

⁴ These are all books of poetry: 'the Six Poets' are presumably the *Mu'allaqāt*.

⁵ i.e. *Tawhīd*, theology: 'the Sanūsī books' are a (?) fifteenth-century North African work.

⁶ Al-Bukhārī, the great ninth-century Persian scholar, whose collection of traditions of the Prophet (*Hadīth*) is of universal authority among the orthodox.

God I came to reflect on religion through the abundance of his light, and through his informative writings, both in Arabic and in languages other than Arabic. He never composed a book from his first work until the present time, except I was, for the most part, the first to copy it down from him. I accompanied him at home and abroad. I did not leave him from the time that I was a youth, until my present age of almost 50 years. Praise be to God for that! . . .

. . . I cannot now number all the shaikhs from whom I acquired knowledge. . . . Many a scholar and many a seeker after knowledge came to us from the East from whom I profited, so many that I cannot count them. Many a scholar and many a seeker after knowledge came to us from the West, so many that I cannot count them. May God reward them all with his approval. . . . Here I collect them for you in verse in order to make the memorizing of them easy. . . .

My shaikhs in the science of grammar and accident
Were our maternal uncle, namely 'Abdullāh. . . .
And Muṣṭafā, Ibrāhīm Barnūwa and Mandara. . . .
And from 'Abd al-Rahmān, son of Muḥammad,
Problems in grammar; he gave me permission to pass on what
I wished.

And our companion al-Firabrī, a reference for logic,
He is high above every star! . . .
The shaikh of our shaikhs, and our pattern Jibrīl
Was my cloud letting down rain in that he gave us
Licence to pass on what he had related on the authority of his
shaikhs,

And taught us the science of The Unity, the greatest favour done
to me. . . .

From al-Hajj Muḥammad my paternal uncle, the son of Rāj, I listened to the *Sahīḥ* of al-Bukhārī the perfumed. . . .
For the two sciences of prosody and rhyme with the Rāmiza
And [the science of] the numerical values of the Qur'ān
Ibrāhīm Mandara was my drinking place.

And many a scholar or student other than these
Has profited me with sciences, from the East and the West.
May God give all of them, and the one who loves them
To drink of the showers of abundant flowing rain of approval. . . .

SECTION SEVEN

The Nineteenth Century

1800 to 1850

‘UTHMĀN DAN FODIO · *The Origins of the Fulani Jihād*¹

Concerning the government of our country, the Hausa Sudan, and neighbouring countries, Muslim and Infidel

I declare, and God the Accomplisher is my witness, that Ahmad Bāba ibn Ahmad ibn al-Hajj² laid down in his book, *Exposition and Information about the kinds of Sudanese Captives*, that Bornu, Kano, Katsena, Songhay, and part of Zagzag were Muslim countries, but the whole of the country to the west was a country of the Unbelievers. If someone asks—of what use is this inquiry into the mode of government of the people mentioned in the passage?—I reply, ‘May God and you, reader, put the information to good use’. The people are Muslim except the Afanu.³ I do not know from whence these latter come, and never heard. To the west of Hausa all the people are Unbelievers. According to our author, Islam was accepted by some kings and others of these parts in his time. Every learned man judges according to the knowledge of his age. Conditions change with the times, and the cure changes with the disease. It is well known that in our time Islam has become widespread in the

¹ From *Tanbihu'l-Ikhwān*, ‘the Admonition to the Brethren’, by ‘Uthmān dan Fodio (c. 1754–1817), translated by H. R. Palmer under the title ‘An Early Fulani Conception of Islam’ in the *Journal of the African Society*, xiii, 1913–14, pp. 407–14, and xiv, 1914–15, pp. 53–59 and pp. 185–92. This work was probably composed in 1226 A.H. (A.D. 1811), after the main objectives of the *jihād* had been achieved and ‘Uthmān dan Fodio had retired from public life. While the primary purpose is to provide a theological-political justification for the *jihād*, it also gives an interesting historical account of the origins and course of the revolution, from a Fulani point of view. On ‘Uthmān himself, see Introduction, pp. 35–36, 38–43.

² On Ahmad Bāba, see Sect. III, p. 91, n. 2.

³ Afanu, a term used elsewhere to refer to the Hausa. See Sect. V, p. 136.

land of Hausa among other than kings. The Kings are Unbelievers and nothing else. If they are believers in Islam, why are they idolators, refusing to follow in the way of God, and raising the flag of earthly power above the flag of Islam?

All this is Unbelief, according to the general opinion.

The government of a country is the government of its King without question. If the King is a Muslim, his land is Muslim; if he is an Unbeliever, his land is a land of Unbelievers. In these circumstances it is lawful for anyone to leave it for another country. There is no dispute that the Hausa Kings worshipped many places of idols, and trees, and rocks, and sacrificed to them. This constitutes Unbelief, according to the general opinion.

This view of mine rests on the weight of authority, but does not deny the existence of some Muslims here and there. We cannot judge from exceptions specially chosen:—

‘You should prefer the usual to the unusual; for the usual and common is what we want to elucidate.’

The above description was applicable to the condition of the Hausa peoples as we found them, before the *jihād*. Since then we have fought them and put them to flight, and killed some, and driven others from this land by the power of God (Exalted be He).

We have appointed Muslim Governors over the land, and it has become a land of Islam, without doubt. Praise be to God.

To explain our flight from Gobir and the reasons of our holy war with the Hausa Sultans.

I declare, and God the Accomplisher is my witness, that the work of my brother ‘Abdullāh on this subject is sufficient. I said to him on a day: ‘Write for us the reasons for our flight from Gobir and our holy war with the Hausa Sultans, to be our apology to whoever reads the book, if he serve God.’ He answered that he would write, and wrote:—

... Know that our Shaikh, ‘Uthmān ibn Muhammad Amīr al-Mu’mīn (May God prolong his life in his service) came forth to call all persons, wherever they might be, to the Faith, and to expound to all whom he could reach their duty to God, and noble endeavour, trying to clear away their doubts concerning God, to deliver them from the doom to come and to save them, to keep alive the doctrines of Islam and to banish wickedness.

Many people received his teaching, and helped him, till his

fame spread abroad. There were learned men, his contemporaries, who disputed and denied his mission.

In the beginning he did not address himself to the kings. After a time his people grew and became famous, till they were known in Hausaland as '*The People*'. Men kept leaving their countries and coming to him. Of the ruling classes some repented, and came to him with all they possessed, leaving their Sultans. Then the Sultans became angry, till there ensued between them and their chiefs the war we remember. Matters did not rest there.

The Sheikh said: 'I will not interfere between anyone and his chief; I will not be a cause of parting.' He strove to avert a quarrel. But the trouble grew and grew. The Sultans kept sending protests to their people. The rupture became open between the Sheikh and them. They saw the growing numbers of his following and the hold that Islam had gained. Its growing strength made them furious, and devils among Jinns and men urged them on, saying: 'If you do not disperse this concourse of people, your power will be gone; they will destroy your country, by causing all the people to leave you and go to them.'

The Sultan of Gobir sent to us plotting our destruction, as we discovered. This showed us the true meaning of his words and deeds. But God averted from us his evil design. He told us, what we know, namely, that they only wished to kill us. So we returned to our abode. The Sultan of Gobir attacked the Sheikh's people; they fled, for they were afraid. The Gobir army followed them and captured some and slew others, seizing children and women, and selling them in our midst.

This made us greatly afraid. The Sultan of Gobir ordered the Sheikh to leave the country with his children and wives and relatives, but to take no one else with him, and disperse his people. The Sheikh replied: 'I will not disperse my people, but I will go away with any who wish to come with me. Let those who wish to remain, remain.'

So we fled from their land in the year 1218 A.H. on the 10th of Dhū'l-qa'da¹ to a place outside Gobir territory.

¹ i.e. 23 Feb. 1804. This withdrawal of 'Uthmān dan Fodio from Gobir to Gudu was known among his followers as the *hijra*, on the analogy of the Prophet's withdrawal to Medina, and later events in the history of the *jihād* were dated from this *hijra*. For the story of the events immediately leading up to the *hijra*, see Hogben, *Muhammadan Emirates of Nigeria*, p. 110.

The Muslims all fled, following us. Many of them joined us with their people and property; some brought nothing but their people; some came with no following at all.

The Sultan of Gobir ordered his Chiefs to seize the goods of all who fled or prevent them leaving.

They seized much property of the Muslims, and killed some of them.

Then he ordered those of the Chiefs nearest to us on the east to keep on killing our people, and plundering, and imprisoning.

The people suffered sorely.

We went to the Sheikh and said: 'Truly this matter has become intolerable; recourse must be had to arms. There can be no doubt that the situation demands a prince to manage our affairs, for Muslims should not be without order or government.'

Then we did homage to the Sheikh, as is directed by the Qur'ān and Sunna in such circumstances, and made him the leader of the Holy War.

We rose to ward off attack. Self-defence and defence of dependants and possessions is a righteous act, according to received opinion. . . .

'UTHMĀN DAN FODIO · *Islam and Women*¹

Chapter dealing with the impious practices which affect this Hausa country, both those which have particularly disturbed it and those which are a general evil.

Most of our educated men leave their wives, their daughters, and their captives morally abandoned, like beasts, without teaching them what God prescribes should be taught them, and without instructing them in the articles of the Law which concern them. Thus, they leave them ignorant of the rules regarding ablutions, prayer, fasting, business dealings, and other duties which they have to fulfil, and which God commands that they should be taught.

Men treat these beings like household implements which

¹ From 'Uthmān dan Fodio, *Nūr al-albāb* (translated from 'Nour el-Eulbab de Cheikh Otmane ben Mohammed ben Otmane dit Ibn-Foudiou', in *Revue Africaine*, Algiers, 41/227-42/228, 1897-8).

become broken after long use and which are then thrown out on the dung-heap. This is an abominable crime! Alas! How can they thus shut up their wives, their daughters, and their captives, in the darkness of ignorance, while daily they impart knowledge to their students? In truth, they act out of egoism, and if they devote themselves to their pupils, that is nothing but hypocrisy and vain ostentation on their part.

Their conduct is blameworthy, for to instruct one's wives, daughters, and captives is a positive duty, while to impart knowledge to students is only a work of supererogation, and there is no doubt but that the one takes precedence over the other.

A man of learning is not strictly obliged to instruct pupils unless he is the only person in the country competent to fulfil this office; in any case he owes in the first place his care to the members of his family, because they have priority over everyone else.

Muslim women—Do not listen to the speech of those who are misguided and who sow the seed of error in the heart of another; they deceive you when they stress obedience to your husbands without telling you of obedience to God and to his Messenger (May God show him bounty and grant him salvation), and when they say that the woman finds her happiness in obedience to her husband.

They seek only their own satisfaction, and that is why they impose upon you tasks which the Law of God and that of his Prophet have never especially assigned to you. Such are—the preparation of foodstuffs, the washing of clothes, and other duties which they like to impose upon you, while they neglect to teach you what God and the Prophet have prescribed for you.

Yes, the woman owes submission to her husband, publicly as well as in intimacy, even if he is one of the humble people of the world, and to disobey him is a crime, at least so long as he does not command what God condemns; in that case she must refuse, since it is wrong for a human creature to disobey the Creator. The recompense for a woman who submits to her husband will be double, but only if she has first obeyed God and the Prophet. . . .

B E L L O · *The Character of Shehu*¹

Know that he ['Uthmān dan Fodio] grew up continent and devout, possessed of pleasing qualities. And none was his equal. People trusted him, and flocked to him from east and west.

He instructed the '*ulamā*',² and raised the banner of religion. He revived the *sunna*,² and put an end to heresy. He spread knowledge and dispelled perplexity. His learning dazzled men's minds. He showed how reality was to be reconciled with the *shari'a*.² For years he explained the Qur'ān in the presence of learned and righteous men of importance, vying with them, through his reading and the different branches of his learning, in rhetoric, and in knowledge of authorities and of what is written and what is abrogated. At the same time he was pre-eminent in knowledge of the *hadīth*,² and learned in its unfamiliar parts and different branches. Learned was he also in the religious sources and in the preservation of the *sunna*.

He resolved difficulties, acting rightly. His vision was sure. He was trained in the teaching of abstruse matters, pre-eminent in reasoning. Devout and ascetic, he was a leading teacher, spreading knowledge. He filled the western country with learning and with seekers after learning. The people of his time pause at what he says. He bore the standard of enlightenment, and was a centre of consultation. Revered by both great and small, he was a reformer at the head of this generation, an eloquent orator, a fine classical poet. Excellent in character, good to associate with, and generous in intercourse. Proven, determined in mien, set apart from his kindred, he is immovable in

¹ From Muhammad Bello, *Infāq al-maysūr*, edited by C. E. J. Whitting, London, 1951, pp. 40–41; this passage is part-translated, part-paraphrased, in E. J. Arnett, *The Rise of the Sokoto Fulani*, Kano, 1929. For the first part of this extract, the description of Shehu's character, down to 'God manifested wonders and miracles through his hand', I have been very glad to be able to make use of a hitherto unpublished translation of Whitting's text by Mr. Charles Smith. The second part, dealing with 'Uthmān dan Fodio's procedure when preaching sermons, is taken from Arnett's version (pp. 23–24), subject to minor corrections based on Whitting's text. Though somewhat repetitive, the extract gives some impression of 'Uthmān's character, and of the veneration in which his son held him. For Muhammad Bello, see Introduction, pp. 10, 42, and below, Sect. VII, pp. 220–1.

² I have left various Islamic terms, which recur in many contexts, untranslated. Roughly '*ulamā*', men of Muslim learning; *sunna*, the theory and practice of the catholic Muslim Community; *shari'a*, Muslim Law; *hadīth*, the traditions of the Prophet.

resolution. Filled with humility and compassion towards mankind, he regards himself in his modesty as the least of creatures. He is the defender of the frontiers of the law. Kind and friendly, he was loved and revered by the people even more than they loved themselves. They ask God's mercy on him with shining faces, sincerely and meekly. He was kind and compassionate to the believers, and was accepted, all agreeing on the greatness of his power.

In a word, description falls short of his attainments. He is shaikh of the '*ulamā'* of his time. Nay, he is a guiding star for the imams of all ages. His qualities do not require comment: for since when has the noon-day sun required to be pointed out? . . . He is meritorious in knowledge of the mystical way,¹ and endowed with strength for effective deeds. He has made a wonderful disclosure of the truth of the Qur'ān, and for him the hidden meaning of visions is as an open door.

He is one whom God has made manifest to mankind, and created in his mercy toward men. God granted him complete acceptance among both great and small, entrusted him with the organisation of learning and gave him authority to govern. He changed men's customs for him, and made him to speak of the hidden things. God manifested wonders and miracles through his hand. . . .

Know you also that I, Bello, used to see him when he was about to come out to the assembled people; he would stop and stand a little while in the open space of his compound, and he would say a few words which I did not hear. After that he would go out to the people. I asked him about this, and he told me he was reviving his enthusiasm; he was making a promise to God of sincerity in what he was going to do. Further he would pray God to make the people assembled here attend to all he told them. Then, when he came before the people, he would greet them so that everyone could hear. And when he had sat down upon his platform he would salute them three times. He looked pleased and smiled at them. Then he would call for silence. He was never wearied by them and never refused them. He was worried too by some that were badly behaved. When he told

¹ A reference to 'Uthmān dan Fodio's connexion with the Qādirī Order, or *tariqa* (*tariqa*, mystical way of approaching God, and thus a religious Order based upon a particular 'way'). See Introduction, pp. 35-36.

them to be silent, when he stopped them asking a multitude of questions, they would not leave off asking.

Then he would begin his sermon to them in a loud voice. He felt no shyness in speaking before this assembly even though there were distinguished '*ulama'* assembled. Forthwith he preached his sermon to them all. He cared for none of them except that his words should be useful to them. If perhaps he were asked a question in the middle of his speech, he would stop and answer it. His religion gave him strength and he feared no criticism. He gave his judgments with justice and never departed from the truth.

That is as much as we are able to tell you of his nature. If indeed we desired to tell all his nature we should need many books.

The Al-Kānami–Bello Correspondence

(i) AL-KĀNAMI · *The Case against the Jihād*¹

Praise be to God, Opener of the doors of guidance, Giver of the means of happiness. Prayer and peace be on him who was

¹ Further extracts from Muhammad Bello, *Infāq al-maysūr*, Whitting edition, London, 1951, pp. 124–7, 142–4, 150, and 157, translated by Mr. Charles Smith. I am much indebted to Mr. Smith, not only for his translation, but also for advice about the historical significance of the whole lengthy al-Kānami–Bello correspondence, from which these brief extracts are taken. The interest of this correspondence lies in the light it throws on the relations between the rulers of Sokoto and Bornu after the Fulani *jihād*; on the methods of diplomacy of the period; and on the political standpoints and characters of the two principals. Copies of nine letters were published by Muhammad Bello in *Infāq al-maysūr*, one from al-Kānami to Bello, five from Bello to al-Kānami, two from 'Uthmān dan Fodio to al-Kānami, and one from al-Kānami to 'Uthmān. Not all of Bello's letters appear to have been delivered. All belong to the period before 1813. The first of the extracts translated here is taken from letter No. 1 in *Infāq*, an early letter of al-Kānami, written after the sack of N'gazargamu, the Bornu capital, by the Fulani under Gwani Mukhtar and their subsequent expulsion by al-Kānami (see Introduction, p. 43). The second extract comes from letter No. 5 in *Infāq*, an apparently much later letter from Bello, which counters arguments put forward by al-Kānami in No. 1. Mr. Smith describes this letter as 'a remarkable testimony to the literary leanings of Bello', and containing 'evidence of his wide reading of the Islamic classics'.

The correspondence ranges over the main questions in dispute between Bello and al-Kānami, i.e. between Sokoto and Bornu. Was the Fulani *jihād* justifiable on accepted Muslim principles? That is to say, was it conducted against states which were in the strict sense 'pagan' (*kāfir*), and therefore *dār al-harb*, not *dār al-Islām*? Was Bornu in fact such a state? Were there appropriate precedents for such a *jihād*? (Muhammad Bello argued at length that the actions of another reforming ruler, Muhammad Askia of Gao, three centuries previously, were in fact a precedent.) Was its real purpose the spreading of the frontiers of Islam, not of Fulani imperial power? Had the *jihād* been conducted according to the strict rules which ought to

sent with the liberal religion, and on his people who prepared the way for the observance of His law, and interpreted it.

From him who is filthy with the dust of sin, wrapped in the cloak of shame, base and contemptible, Muḥammad al-Amin ibn Muḥammad al-Kānamī to the Fulani 'ulamā' and their chiefs. Peace be on him who follows His guidance.

The reason for writing this letter is that when fate brought me to this country, I found the fire which was blazing between you and the people of the land. I asked the reason, and it was given as injustice by some and as religion by others. So according to our decision in the matter I wrote to those of your brothers who live near to us asking them the reason and instigation of their transgression, and they returned me a weak answer, not such as comes from an intelligent man, much less from a learned person, let alone a reformer. They listed the names of books, and we examined some of them, but we do not understand from them the things which they apparently understood. Then, while we were still perplexed, some of them attacked our capital, and the neighbouring Fulani came and camped near us. So we wrote to them a second time beseeching them in the name of God and Islam to desist from their evil doing. But they refused and attacked us. So, when our land was thus confined and we found no place even to dwell in, we rose in defence of ourselves, praying God to deliver us from the evil of their deeds; and we did what we did. Then when we found some respite, we desisted, and for the future God is all-knowing.

We believe in writing; even if it makes no impression on you, it is better than silence. Know that if an intelligent man accepts some question in order to understand it, he will give a straightforward answer to it.

Tell us therefore why you are fighting us and enslaving our free people. If you say that you have done this to us because of our paganism, then I say that we are innocent of paganism, and it is far from our compound. If praying and the giving of alms, knowledge of God, fasting in Ramadān and the building of mosques is paganism, what is Islam? These buildings in which be applied in such cases, or had there been excesses? Had the Fulani been the aggressors, or had Bornu, by allying itself with supposedly pagan Hausa governments, been responsible for provoking the conflict? In the extracts quoted here the main issue under discussion is whether Bornu at the time of the *jihād* could properly be described as a land of paganism (*dār kufr*).

you have been standing of a Friday, are they churches or synagogues or fire temples? If they were other than Muslim places of worship, then you would not pray in them when you capture them. Is this not a contradiction?

Among the biggest of your arguments for the paganism of the believers generally is the practice of the amirs of riding to certain places for the purpose of making alms-giving sacrifices there; the uncovering of the heads of free women; the taking of bribes; embezzlement of the property of orphans; oppression in the courts. But these five charges do not require you to do the things you are doing. As for this practice of the amirs, it is a disgraceful heresy and certainly blameworthy. It must be forbidden and disapproval of its perpetrators must be shown. But those who are guilty of it do not thereby become pagans; since not one of them claims that it is particularly efficacious, or intends by it to associate anything with God. On the contrary, the extent of their pretence is their ignorant idea that alms given in this way are better than otherwise. He who is versed in the books of *fiqh*, and has paid attention to the talk of the imams in their disputation—when deviation from the right road in matters of burial and slaughter are spoken of—will know the test of what we have said. Consider Damietta, a great Islamic city between Egypt and Syria, a place of learning and Islam: in it there is a tree, and the common people do to this tree as did the non-Arabs. But not one of the '*ulamā'* rises to fight them or has spoken of their paganism.

As for uncovering the head in free women, this is also *haram*, and the Qur'ān has prohibited it. But she who does it does not thereby become a pagan. It is denial which leads to paganism. Failing to do something while believing in it is rather to be described as disobedience requiring immediate repentance. If a free woman has prayed with the head uncovered, and the time passes, but she does not repeat the prayer in accordance with what we know they say in the books of *fiqh*, surely you do not believe that her prayer is not proper because she has thereby become a pagan?

The taking of bribes, embezzlement of the property of orphans and injustice in the courts are all major sins which God has forbidden. But sin does not make anyone a pagan when he has confessed his faith. And if you had ordered the right and

forbidden the wrong, and retired when the people did not desist, it would have been better than these present¹ doings. If ordering and forbidding are confined within their proper limits, they do not lead to anything more serious. But your forbidding has involved you in sin, and brought evil on you and the Muslims in this world and the next. . . .

Since acts of immorality and disobedience without number have long been committed in all countries, then Egypt is like Bornu, only worse. So also is Syria and all the cities of Islam. There has been corruption, embezzlement of the property of orphans, oppression and heresy in these places from the time of the Bani Umayya [the Umayyad dynasty] right down to our own day. No age and no country is free from its share of heresy and sin. If, thereby, they all become pagan, then surely their books are useless. So how can you construct arguments based on what they say who are infidel according to you? Refuge from violence and discord in religion is with God. . . .

We have indeed heard of things in the character of the Shaikh 'Uthmān ibn Fūdī, and seen things in his writings which are contrary to what you have done. If this business does originate from him, then I say that there is no power nor might save through God, the most high, the most glorious. Indeed we thought well of him. But now, as the saying is, we love the Shaikh and the truth when they agree. But if they disagree it is the truth which comes first. We pray God to preserve us from being those of whom He said:

‘Say: “Shall we tell you who will be
the greatest losers in their works?
Those whose striving goes astray
in the present life, while they think
that they are working good deeds.”’¹

And from being those of whom he also said:

‘But they split in their affair between them
into sects, each party rejoicing in
what is with them.’²

Peace.

¹ Qur'ān, Sūra 18, verses 103–4. This and the three following quotations from the Qur'ān are taken from the English renderings of A. J. Arberry, in *The Koran Interpreted*, London, 1955.

² Qur'ān, Sūra 23, verse 55.

(ii) B E L L O · *The Case against Bornu*

In the name of God, the compassionate, the merciful. Prayer of God be on him after whom there is no prophet. Praise be to God who has preserved the religion of Islam by the laws in his Qur'ān for the believers who seek guidance; who has wiped out that which Satan has put in the hearts of those who rule them oppressively, and in whose hearts there is sickness, the hard-heartedness of the idolators; who has preserved the laws in the Qur'ān by his saying:

'It is We who have sent down the Remembrance and We watch over it.'¹

Prayer and peace on our lord Muḥammad, lord of the prophets, the sayer who keeps the true knowledge from the false sayings of all its enemies, who preserves it from the alterations of the interpolators, the boastings of the triflers and the comments of ignorant people. Prayer and peace also on all his people and companions and on those who follow them in the better way until the day of judgment.

From Muḥammad Bello ibn Amir al-Mu'minīn 'Uthmān ibn Fūdī to al-Hājj al-Amin ibn Muḥammad al-Kānamī, peace and sincere greeting.

We have occupied ourselves with the letter which you wrote to those of our people who are your neighbours asking for an explanation of the true state of affairs. We have given it full consideration, and have understood from it what led to it. Briefly, we have understood from it that you desire us to follow the word of God, may He be exalted, when He says:

'If two parties of the believers fight,
put things right between them.'²

Secondly you have put forward certain arguments. . . . But, by God, I tell you, my brother, that, if the Lord is kind to you, and you look on us with the eye of justice, it will be seemly for you to find that these are false arguments and mischief-making words, refutable contentions for the most part and worthless propositions. It is indeed seemly for me not to reply, but I am constrained to do so through solicitude for the ignorance of the *talaba*,³ so that they may not follow you because of your great

¹ Qur'ān, Sūra 15, verse 9.

² Qur'ān, Sūra 49, verse 9.

³ Seekers of knowledge, students; often used to refer to members of a Sufi Order.

conceit and mischief-making, and think that you are right in this way of acting. My intention is neither childishness nor quarrelling.

This is so that you will learn in the first place that what made it proper for us to permit our people neighbouring on you to fight Bornu was the continual receipt of news (of which we mastered the contents) from those who mixed with the people of Bornu and knew their condition, to the following effect. It was that they make sacrifices to rocks and trees, and regard the river as the Copts did the Nile in the days of the Jāhiliya. It was also that they have shrines with their idols in them and with priests. We have seen the proof of this in your first letter where you say: 'Among the biggest of your arguments for the paganism of the believers generally is the practice of the amirs of riding to certain places for the purpose of making alms-giving sacrifices there.' Then you explained that they do not wish by this to associate anything with God; nor do they believe that it has influence on events, the extent of their claim being that alms given in this way are better than otherwise. But it is not hidden from the meanest intelligence that this claim warrants no consideration. The verdict depends on what is seen. And God controls what is secret. Him whom we have seen sacrificing to rocks and trees we have charged with paganism. These matters are among those for which we have charged Bornu with paganism.

For what caused the Amir of Bornu (according to what has reached us) to inflict harm on the believers among the Shaikh's people near to you until they were obliged to flee? What caused him to begin to fight them, unless he were in alliance with the Hausa kings to assist them? It is manifest that he would not have risen to assist the Hausa kings had he not approved of their religion. And certainly the approval of paganism is itself paganism. To fight them is permitted, since the *jihād* against paganism is incumbent on all who are able.

May it be clear to you from what we have said of him that the Amir of Bornu has been known for his paganism. You also know that the law of a country is the law of its sultan. If he is a Muslim, then the country is *dār al-Islām*; if he is a pagan, then the country is *dār kufr*. Only those ignorant of the words of the '*ulamā'* will deny this. . . .

If you had confined yourself to saying that the Bornuans had

repented and desisted from what they were at, it would have been better than all this talk and clamour. For the latter is a weak argument for preventing the fighting to anyone who acknowledges the truth. But we did not know previously, and nothing reached us at all to show, that they had repented. However in the autumn of this year we received messages concerning you which indicated this. We have therefore sent our messenger to you in order that we may confirm this information, and so that he may bring back an account of the true state of affairs. If the matter is as we hear, then we shall despatch our messenger, Gidado Lima, to assemble our chiefs of the east. You will send those whom you please to conduct your affairs and whom you trust behind your back; and a meeting will take place in Siko. And those assembled will make a treaty according to such bonds and covenants as they find mutually acceptable, and fighting will stop. Let peace be established. In this connection we have delayed raiding Bornu this year, though we intended to. If the matter is as I have said, namely that they have repented and desisted, then let the fighting stop, for it is repugnant to our relationship, and peace is necessary between us. . . .

You say that generations of '*ulamā'* and reformers from among the imams have passed, and they have not used such arguments as these, nor charged the generality of believers with paganism, nor drawn the sword of oppression in this way, even though this heresy and immorality have been present in all countries in all ages. You say that the verses of the Qur'ān which we cite, indicating what are crimes in the sight of God, are not hidden from old women and children, let alone learned '*ulamā*'. You mention that we can do what the ancients did, though they were princes in God's name, but that more is not possible, since this generation is not created to be more virtuous or stronger or more learned than the first Muslims. The answer to this is that we have made war on Bornu only because of what I have already mentioned. There is nothing more; though it is permitted to struggle against even less than that, as will appear. The statements in your premisses and the contentions you have used to elucidate them amount only to refutable arguments. How can it be said that it is not legal, for him who is able, to reform immorality or put an end to corruption? It is not right for an able man to point to learned men who in the past have

not bothered to change it or speak of it. By my faith, that is of no avail. . . .

We have indeed attempted many times to initiate with you the peace which you ask for, and we have not ceased to write to you concerning it every year. But we think that probably our messages do not reach you, and that you do not receive intelligence of them. Please God there may be a suitable reconciliation. May God direct us and you to the good. . . .

DENHAM AND CLAPPERTON · *Muhammad al-Kānamī:*¹ *The Ruler*

The Felatahs [Fulani], however, did not long enjoy the territory which their conquests had made them possessors of; and they became, unintentionally, the cause of raising the present dynasty to govern Bornou, in the person of Alameen-ben-Mohammed-el-Kanemy [Muhammad al-Amin ibn Muhammad al-Kānamī], a sheikh of the Koran, who holds the kingdom by a kind of dictatorship, elective and temporary; and his power, which he professes to hold by divine authority, approaches nearly to despotism. Born in Fezzan, of Kanem parents, though on the father's side descended from a Moor, Alameen had, after visiting Egypt, proceeded to Kanem, as sheikh of the Koran, where he was greatly loved and respected, on account of the extreme correctness of his life, and the benevolence of his disposition; while the miracles and cures which he performed, by writing charms, were the theme of all the country round.

¹ These three extracts are taken from D. Denham, H. Clapperton, and W. Oudney, *Narrative of Travels and Discoveries in Northern and Central Africa, in the years 1822, 1823, and 1824*, London, 1826. The first extract is from Major Denham's Narrative, 3rd ed., 1828, vol. ii, pp. 178–85; the second is from Appendix XIV (1st ed.), pp. 171–2; and the third is from Appendixes V and I, pp. 144–5 and 139–40. Major Dixon Denham (1786–1828), after his return to England from this expedition, was appointed Superintendent of Liberated Slaves (1826), and later (1828) Governor, of Sierra Leone, where he died. Captain Hugh Clapperton (1788–1827), born in Dumfriesshire, went to sea at the age of 13, serving first as a cabin-boy in a merchant ship, then in the Royal Navy. He served on the East India station from 1808 to 1813; then in Canada (commissioned 1816); returned to Scotland on half-pay in 1817. In 1820 he met Dr. Walter Oudney in Edinburgh, whose expedition to the interior of Africa he volunteered to join. He died at Sokoto on his second African journey. See Introduction, p. 15, and M. F. Perham and J. Simmons, *African Discovery*, London, 1945, pp. 87–115. For Muhammad al-Kānamī, see Introduction, pp. 43–44.

Soon after the conquest of Bornou, El Kanemy formed a plan for delivering that country from the bondage into which it had fallen; and, stirring up the Kanemboos to assist him by a well-planned tale of having been called by a vision to this undertaking, he made his first campaign with scarcely 400 followers, and defeated an army of the Felatahs nearly 8,000 strong. He followed up this victory with great promptitude and resolution, and in less than ten months had been the conqueror in forty different battles.

Nature had bestowed upon him all the qualifications for a great commander; an enterprising genius, sound judgment, features engaging, with a demeanour gentle and conciliating: and so little of vanity was there mixed with his ambition, that he refused the offer of being made sultan; and placing Mohammed, the brother of Sultan Achmet, on the throne, he, first doing homage himself, insisted on the whole army following his example. The sheikh built for Sultan Mohammed his present residence, New Birnie, establishing himself at Angornou, three miles distant, and retaining the dictatorship of the Kingdom *pro tempore*. Such a commencement was also extremely politic, on the part of the sheikh; but his aspiring mind was not calculated to rest satisfied with such an arrangement.

The whole population now flocked to his standard, and appeared willing to invest him with superior power, and a force to support it. One of the first offers they made was to furnish him with twenty horses per day, until a more regular force was organized, which continued for four years. He now raised the green flag, the standard of the Prophet, refused all titles but that of the 'servant of God'; and after clearing the country of the Felatahs, he proceeded to punish all those nations who had given them assistance, and with the slaves, the produce of these wars, rewarded his faithful Kanemboo and other followers for their fidelity and attachment.

Even in the breasts of some of the Bornouese, successful war had raised a passion for conquest; their victories, no less a matter of surprise than delight, crest-fallen and dispirited as they were, gave a stimulus to their exertions, and they became accustomed to warfare and regardless of danger.

If he has impressed his followers with a belief that supernatural powers are vested in their leader, much good policy as

well as superstition may have influenced his conduct:—no one could have used greater endeavours to substitute laws of reason for practices of barbarity, and, though feared, he is loved and respected. ‘When lenity and cruelty play for a kingdom, the gentlest gamester is the soonest winner.’ Compared to all around him, he is an angel, and has subdued more by his generosity, mildness, and benevolent disposition, than by the force of his arms. He is completely the winner of his own honour and reputation, and assumes to himself the title of Liberator, or Salvator: in delivering the country, he governs his own adopted one, from servitude to strangers and tyrants; and his highest ambition is to restore the empire of Bornou to its former splendour and vast extent: his life, however, will most likely be too short for this great work, unless his means for carrying on offensive war should be surprisingly increased.

For the last eight years [i.e. from 1816 to 1824] the sheikh has carried on a very desperate and bloody war with the sultan of Begharmi,¹ who governs a powerful and warlike people, inhabiting a very large tract of country south of Bornou, and on the eastern bank of the Shary. Although meeting with some reverses, and on one occasion losing his eldest son in these wars, who was greatly beloved by the people, he has, upon the whole, been successful; and is said to have, from first to last, destroyed and led into slavery more than thirty thousand of the sultan of Begharmi’s subjects, besides burning his towns and driving off his flocks. . . .

The late sultan of Bornou,² who always accompanied the sheikh to the field, also lost his life in these wars: his death was attributable to his immense size and weight; the horse he rode refused to move on with him from fatigue, although at the time not more than 500 yards from the gates of Angala, and he fell into the hands of the enemy. He died, however, with great dignity, and six of his eunuchs and as many of his slaves, who would not quit him, shared his fate. A sultan of Bornou carries no arms, and it is beneath his dignity to defend himself: sitting down, therefore, under a tree, with his people around him, he

¹ For Bagirmi, south-east of Bornou, which, before the eruption of the Fulani *jihād*, had been a vassal state of Bornou, see Urvoi, *Histoire de l’empire du Bornou*, pp. 105–6, and *Encyclopædia of Islām*, i, pp. 570–2.

² Mai Dunama, killed at the battle of Ngala, in 1817.

received his enemies, and hiding his face in the shawl which covered his head, was pierced with a hundred spears.

Ibrahim, his brother, succeeded him, who is now no more than twenty-two years old. The sultanship of Bornou, however, is but a name: the court still keeps up considerable state, and adheres strictly to its ancient customs, and this is the only privilege left them. When the sultan gives audience to strangers, he sits in a kind of cage,¹ made of the bamboo, through the bars of which he looks on his visitors, who are not allowed to approach within seventy or eighty yards of his person. El Kanemy is a most interesting and aspiring chief, and an extraordinary (if not a solitary) instance, in the eastern world, of a man raising himself to sovereign power, from a humble station, without shedding blood by the assassin's knife, or removing those who stood in his way by the bow-string or the poisoned cup.

DENHAM AND CLAPPERTON · *Muhammad al-Kānāmī: The Poet*

The Song of Mohammed-Alameen ben Mohammed El-Kanemy, Sheikh of the Koran, Lawgiver to Bornou, and Governor of Kanem, on his return from the Begharmi Country in 1821. Translated by Major Denham.

'I return to my people, the people of my heart, and the children of my solicitude. At break of day, fasting, coming towards Kouka [Kuka], with my morning prayer on my lips, in sight of the gate, the gate that saw me depart! The morning wind blew fresh and cool, yet mild as the evening breeze. The battle of spears had been long doubtful; but had ended in glory; had covered my people with honour and victory, God Almighty assisting us. These were our deeds; they lived in the memory of all! Oh, glorious expedition! But the greatest joy must be told; the joy, oh, how exquisite! the recovery of my lost love, a part of myself! Her high and noble forehead, like the new moon, and nose like a rainbow. Her arched eyebrows reaching to her temples, overhanging eyes than which the moon is less bright, as it shines through darkness; large piercing eyes, whose looks could never be mistaken! A single glance at these her all-conquering beauties instantly called her to my

¹ The *Fanadir*. See Sect. II, p. 71, and Introduction, p. 22.

mind with all the graces of her disposition; lips sweeter than honey, and colder than the purest water. Oh, dearest of my wives! Heaven's own gift; what were my sensations when I removed the veil from thy face. Thou knewest me not in thy alarm; animation had left thee. Thou knewest not what was to follow; and thy large eyes had closed in despair. It seemed that lightning had struck me with its fire. As the light of morning dispels the blackness of night, so did she, reviving, impart to me a gladness overpowering as the blood-red sun, when it breaks forth in its splendour, warming the sons of earth with its reanimating fires. I thought of the day when she was blooming in my presence, when the news of her loss came to me like a blast from the desert. My head was laid low with sorrow. The Spring returned with its freshness; but its showers could not revive my drooping head. Who shall now tell of my joy! From her shoulders to her waist, how fair is her proportion! When she moves, she is like branches waved by a gentle breeze. Silks from India are less soft than her skin; and her form, though noble, is timid as the fawn. Let this my joy be proclaimed to all my people. Let them take my blessing, and give me congratulation. . . .'

DENHAM AND CLAPPERTON · *Muhammad al-Kānamī: The Diplomat*

A letter [of introduction, written on behalf of Hugh Clapperton] from the Sheikh of Bornou to the Sultan of Kanou.

'Praise be to God, and prayers and peace be unto the Apostle of God (Mohammed).

'From the slave of the high God, Mohammed El-ameen ben Mohammed El-kanemy, to the head of his land and the leader of his people, the learned Mohammed Daboo,¹ lord and master of Kanou: Perfect peace, and the mercy and blessings of God, be unto you.

'Hence, the bearer, who is going to you is our friend Mohammed El-Wardy, in whose company he has some Englishmen; who came to the land of Soodan for the purpose of seeing and delighting themselves with the wonders it contains, and to

¹ Ibrāhīm Dabo, ibn Muhammad, Sarkin Kano from 1819 to 1845. See Hogben, *Muhammadan Emirates of Nigeria*, p. 76. Al-Kānamī became involved in war with Kano a year later (1825–6).

examine and see the lakes and rivers, and forests and deserts therein. They have been sent by their king for this purpose.

'Between their nation and the Moosleemeen, there have existed, since the times of their fathers and great grandfathers (ancestors), treaties of religious amity and friendship, special to themselves out of all other nations that have erred, and are at variance with the doctrine of Aboo Hanifa.¹ There never was between them and the Moosleemeen any dispute; and whenever war is declared by the other Christians against the Moosleemeen, they are always ready to help us, as it has happened in the great assistance they gave to our nation when they delivered Egypt from the hands of the French.² They have, therefore, continually penetrated into the countries of the Moosleemeen, and travelled wherever they pleased with confidence and trust, and without being either molested or hurt. They are, as is stated, descendants of the ancient Greek emperor Heraclius, who received and esteemed the letter sent to him by the Apostle of God (Mohammed), whom may God bless, by Dahi-yah El-kalbee,³ containing his exhortation to him to embrace the Moosleeman faith; and who, on receiving that sacred epistle, preserved it in a gold case—though it is stated in the books of history, that he did not become a Mooslem.

'Thus, if God permit them to reach you in safety, be attentive to them and send guards to conduct them to the country of Kashna [Katsina], safe and unhurt; for they are at the mercy of God, and at the honour of his Apostle; and you are well aware of the Alcoraanic sayings upon the subject of the observance of honour. And peace be with you.'

Dated 'Wednesday, the 6th day of Rabee-ul-thani [Rabi' al-thāni], 1239', (corresponding to January, 1824).

Translation of a letter from the Sheikh Mohammed El Kanemy, Chieftain of Bornou, in the Interior of Africa, to his Most Ex-

¹ Imām Abū Ḥanīfa, eighth-century 'Irāqi scholar, founder of the Ḥanafī school of Law, dominant in the Ottoman Empire.

² A reference, presumably, to the Battle of the Nile. 'Our nation', the Muslim 'ummā'.

³ Dihya ibn Khalifa al-Kalbi al-Khazrajī. There is an old, though doubtful, Muslim tradition that the Prophet, during his Medina period, sent letters to Heraclius, the Byzantine Emperor, the Persian King, the ruler of Abyssinia, the governor of Alexandria, and others, inviting them to embrace Islam. (*Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, pp. 401–2.)

‘Praise be to God, and blessings and peace be unto the Apostle of God (Mohammed). From the servant of the High God, Mohammed El Ameen ben Mohammed El Kanemy.

‘To the pre-eminent above his equals, and the respected among his inferiors, the great King of the English, salutation be to him from us:

‘Whereas your messengers, the travellers through the earth, for the purpose, as they state, of seeing and knowing its marvellous things, have come to us, we welcomed them, and paid attention to their arrival, in consequence of what we heard of your intercourse with the Musleemeen, and the establishment of your friendly relations between you and their kings, since the time of your and their fathers and grandfathers (ancestors).

‘We have thus regarded that friendship, and behaved to them according to its merits, as much as God the Omnipotent enabled us. They communicated your compliments to us, and that which you stated in your letter, that you would not object, if we should be in want of anything from your country, was made known to us; and we felt thankful to you for this (offer) on your part.

‘They are now returning to you, after having accomplished their wishes; but one of them, whose period of life was ended, died. This was the physician; and an excellent and wise man he was.¹

‘The Rayes Khaleel (travelling name of Major Denham) desired of us permission, that merchants seeking for elephant-teeth, ostrich feathers, and other such things, that are not to be found in the country of the English, might come among us. We told him that our country, as he himself has known and seen its state, does not suit any heavy (rich) traveller, who may possess great wealth. But if a few light persons (small capitalists), as four or five only, with little merchandize, would come, there will be no harm. This is the utmost that we can give him permission for; and more than this number must not come. If you should wish to send anyone from your part to this country again,

¹ A reference to Dr. Walter Oudney, who died at Murmur, on the route from Kuka to Kano, in January, 1824.

it would be best to send Rayes Khaleel, for he knows the people and the country, and became as one of the inhabitants.

‘The few things that we are in want of are noted down in a separate paper, which we forward to you.

‘Write to the consul at Tripoli, and to that at Cairo, desiring them, if any of our servants or people should go to them for any affair, either on land or at sea, to assist them, and do for them according to their desire. And peace be with you.

‘Dated on the evening of Saturday, the middle of the month Fledja [Dhū'l-hijja] 1239 of Hejra, (corresponding to August, 1824).

‘Sealed. The will of God be done, and in God hath his faith, his slave Mohammed El Ameen ben Mohammed El Kanemy.’

LYON; DENHAM · *Bornu Trade with North Africa*¹

1. From Bornou the Tibbo bring [to the Fezzan] slaves, wooden bowls, kaffala, or gourd bowls; a few tobes or shirts; sheep, goats, and a little honey. Lion’s skins were once brought, but they are not now to be had, owing to the Sultan of Bornou buying them all up for his negresses to sleep on, to prevent their bearing children, as he has already a large family. It is implicitly believed that a woman who sleeps on a lion’s skin can never become pregnant. . . .

2. In the Bornou towns are many hadgis, who have made the pilgrimage to Mecca, and excel in writing the Arabic characters, as well as teaching the art to others. However strange it may appear, each kafila [caravan] leaving Bornou for Fezzan (the only road now open) carries several copies of the Koran, written by the Bornou fighis (clerks), which will sell in Barbary or Egypt for forty or fifty dollars each. The Arabic characters are also used by them to express their own language: every chief has one of these fighis attached to him, who write dispatches from his dictation with great facility.

¹ The first extract is from Captain G. F. Lyon, R.N., *A Narrative of Travels in Northern Africa in the years 1818, 19 and 20*, London, 1821, ch. iv, ‘Articles of commerce between Fezzan and the Interior, as well as to Egypt, Bornou and Waday’, p. 159. The second extract is from Denham, Clapperton, and Oudney, op. cit. (3rd ed.), vol. ii, pp. 161–2.

CLAPPERTON · *Sultan Muhammad Bello: First Meeting*¹

At noon we arrived at Sackatoo [Sokoto], where a great multitude of people was assembled to look at me, and I entered the city amid the hearty welcomes of young and old. I was conducted to the house of the gadado, or vizier, where apartments were provided for me and my servants. After being supplied with plenty of milk, I was left to repose myself. The gadado, an elderly man named Simnou Bona Lima,² arrived near midnight, and came instantly to see me. He was excessively polite, but would on no account drink tea with me, as he said I was a stranger to their land, and had not yet eaten of his bread. He told me the sultan wished to see me in the morning, and repeatedly assured me of experiencing the most cordial reception. He spoke Arabic extremely well, which he said he learned solely from the Koran.

March 17th [1824]. After breakfast the sultan sent for me; his residence was at no great distance. In front of it there is a large quadrangle, into which several of the principal streets of the city lead. We passed through three coozees, or guardhouses, without the least detention, and were immediately ushered into the presence of Bello, the second sultan of the Felatahs. He was seated on a small carpet, between two pillars supporting the roof of a thatched house, not unlike one of our cottages. The walls and pillars were painted blue and white, in the Moorish taste; and on the back wall was sketched a fire-screen, ornamented with a coarse painting of a flower-pot. An armchair, with an iron lamp standing on it, was placed on each side of the screen. The sultan bade me many hearty welcomes, and asked me if I was not much tired with my journey from Burderawa. I told him it was the most severe travelling I had experienced between Tripoli and Sackatoo, and thanked him for the guard, the conduct of which I did not fail to commend in the strongest terms.

He asked me a great many questions about Europe, and our religious distinctions. He was acquainted with the names of some of the more ancient sects, and asked whether we were

¹ From Denham, Clapperton, and Oudney, op. cit., Captain Clapperton's Narrative (1st ed.), pp. 81–83.

² i.e. Usman Dan Lima, Muhammad Bello's *wazir*, referred to on p. 204.

Nestorians or Socinians. To extricate myself from the embarrassment occasioned by this question, I bluntly replied we were called Protestants. 'What are Protestants?' says he. I attempted to explain to him, as well as I was able, that having protested, more than two centuries and a half ago, against the superstitions, absurdities, and abuses practised in those days, we had ever since professed to follow simply what was written 'in the book of our Lord Jesus', as they call the New Testament, and thence received the name of Protestants. He continued to ask several other theological questions, until I was obliged to confess myself not sufficiently versed in religious subtleties to resolve these knotty points, having always left that task to others more learned than myself. . . .

The sultan is a noble-looking man, forty-four years of age, although much younger in appearance, five feet ten inches high, portly in person, with a short curling black beard, a small mouth, a fine forehead, a Grecian nose, and large black eyes. He was dressed in a light blue cotton tobe, with a white muslin turban, the shawl of which he wore over the nose and mouth in the Tuarick fashion.

CLAPPERTON · *Sultan Muhammad Bello: A Presentation*¹

Friday [Oct.] 27th . . . I found myself much relieved, and the Gadado, paying me an early visit, said, if I was able, the sultan would receive his majesty's letters and presents. I immediately dressed in my uniform, and the presents being ready packed in separate parcels, the time-piece, watch, etc. taken out of the tin cases, and all just as they had left the maker's hands, I went, accompanied by the Gadado, my servants and the servants of the Gadado carrying the presents, consisting of red silk umbrella, silver-mounted; a message cane, silver-mounted; twelve yards red damask; twelve yards sky blue silk; twenty-four yards cambric; two pounds cloves; a fowling-piece, brass mountings, single barrel; a plain fowling-piece, double barrel; a pair of pistols for his eldest son; two short swords; two boxes of rockets;

¹ H. Clapperton, *Journal of Second Expedition into the Interior of Africa from the Bight of Benin to Soccatoo*, London, 1829, pp. 196–8. This second visit of Clapperton to Sokoto took place in 1826–7.

a quantity of powder, balls, flints, and small shot; one ream of English foolscap paper; two bundles of black lead pencils; coloured prints of the royal family, battles, and a plain journal book; a small ditto; a dozen pair white cotton stockings; a dozen pair white cotton gloves; a time-piece by Rigby; gold watch by ditto; a Bramah pen; a pistol, detonating lock; two gilt chains; four clasp knives; a dressing-case complete; a magnifying looking-glass; two English bridles; a quantity of medicines; two empty trunks; the New Testament in Arabic; that part of the Old Testament which was translated; the Koran in Arabic; Euclid's Elements in ditto; Ebn Senna in ditto; History of the Tartars under Tamerlane; Psalms of David; several chapters of the Bible, with a number of other books in Arabic. To the Gadado a smaller collection of the same kind of articles. . . .

Saw the sultan this morning, who was sitting in the inner apartment of his house, with the Arabic copy of Euclid before him, which I had given to him as a present. He said that his family had a copy of Euclid brought by one of their relations, who had procured it in Mecca; that it was destroyed when part of his house was burnt down last year; and he observed, that he could not but feel very much obliged to the king of England for sending him so valuable a present. . . .

CLAPPERTON · *Kano Market*¹

The soug [sūq], or market, is well supplied with every necessary and luxury in request among the people of the interior. It is held . . . on a neck of land between two swamps; and as this site is covered with water during the rainy season, the holding it here is consequently limited to the dry months, when it is numerously frequented as well by strangers as inhabitants: indeed, there is no market in Africa so well regulated. The sheikh of the soug lets the stalls at so much a month, and the rent forms a part of the revenues of the governor. The sheikh of the soug also fixes the prices of all wares, for which he is

¹ From Denham, Clapperton, and Oudney, *Travels*, Captain Clapperton's Narrative, pp. 51–53. A longer extract, including this passage, is quoted in Perham and Simmons, *African Discovery*, pp. 88–94.

entitled to a small commission, at the rate of fifty whydah or cowries, on every sale amounting to four dollars or 8000 cowries, according to the standard exchange between silver money and this shell currency. There is another custom regulated with equal certainty and in universal practice: the seller returns to the buyer a stated part of the price, by way of blessing, as they term it, or of luck-penny, according to our less devout phraseology. This is a discount of two per cent. on the purchase money; but if the bargain is made in an hired house, it is the landlord who receives the luck-penny. I may here notice the great convenience of the cowrie, which no forgery can imitate; and which, by the dexterity of the natives in reckoning the largest sums, forms a ready medium of exchange in all transactions, from the lowest to the highest. Particular quarters are appropriated to distinct articles; the smaller wares being set out in booths in the middle, and cattle and bulky commodities being exposed to sale in the outskirts of the market-place: wood, dried grass, bean straw for provender, beans, Guinea corn, Indian corn, wheat, etc. are in one quarter; goats, sheep, asses, bullocks, horses, and camels, in another; earthenware and indigo in a third; vegetables and fruit of all descriptions, such as yams, sweet potatoes, water and musk melons, pappaw fruit, limes, cashew nuts, plums, mangoes, shaddocks, dates, etc. in a fourth, and so on. Wheaten flour is baked into bread of three different kinds; one like muffins, another like our twists, and the third a light puffy cake, with honey and melted butter poured over it. Rice is also made into little cakes. Beef and mutton are killed daily. Camel flesh is occasionally to be had, but is often meagre; the animal being commonly killed, as an Irish grazier might say, to save its life: it is esteemed a great delicacy, however, by the Arabs, when the carcass is fat. The native butchers are fully as knowing as our own, for they make a few slashes to show the fat, blow up meat, and sometimes even stick a little sheep's wool on a leg of goat's flesh, to make it pass with the ignorant for mutton. When a fat bull is brought to market to be killed, its horns are dyed red with henna; drummers attend, a mob soon collects, the news of the animal's size and fatness spreads, and all run to buy. The colouring of the horns is effected by applying the green leaves of the henna tree, bruised into a kind of poultice. Near the shambles there is a number of

cook-shops in the open air; each consisting merely of a wood fire, stuck round with wooden skewers, on which small bits of fat and lean meat, alternately mixed, and scarcely larger than a penny-piece each, are roasting. Everything looks very clean and comfortable; and a woman does the honours of the table, with a mat dish-cover placed on her knees, from which she serves her guests, who are squatted around her. Ground gussub [sugar-cane] water is retailed at hand, to those who can afford this beverage at their repast: the price, at most, does not exceed twenty cowries. . . .

The interior of the market is filled with stalls of bamboos, laid out in regular streets; where the most costly wares are sold, and articles of dress, and other little matters of use or ornament made and repaired. Bands of musicians parade up and down to attract purchasers to particular booths. Here are displayed coarse writing paper, of French manufacture, brought from Barbary; scissors and knives, of native workmanship; crude antimony and tin, both the produce of the country; unwrought silk of a red colour, which they make into belts and slings, or weave in stripes into the finest cotton tobes; armlets and bracelets of brass; beads of glass, coral, and amber; finger rings of pewter and a few silver trinkets, but none of gold; tobes, turkadees, and turban shawls; coarse woollen cloths of all colours; coarse calico; Moorish dresses; the cast-off gaudy garbs of the Mamelukes of Barbary; pieces of Egyptian linen, checked or striped with gold; sword blades from Malta, etc., etc. The market is crowded from sunrise to sunset every day, not excepting their Sabbath, which is kept on Friday. The merchants understand the benefits of monopoly as well as any people in the world; they take good care never to overstock the market, and if anything falls in price, it is immediately withdrawn for a few days. The market is regulated with the greatest fairness, and the regulations are strictly and impartially enforced. If a tobe or a turkadee, purchased here, is carried to Bornu or any other distant place, without being opened, and is there discovered to be of inferior quality, it is immediately sent back, as a matter of course,—the name of the *dylala*, or broker, being written inside every parcel. In this case the *dylala* must find out the seller, who, by the laws of Kano, is forthwith obliged to refund the purchase money.

CLAPPERTON · *A Fulani Battle*¹

After the midday prayers, all, except the eunuchs, camel drivers, and such other servants as were of use only to prevent theft, whether mounted or on foot, marched towards the object of attack; and soon arrived before the walls of the city. I also accompanied them, and took up my station close to the Gadado. The march had been the most disorderly that can be imagined; horse and foot intermingling in the greatest confusion, all rushing to get forward; sometimes the followers of one chief tumbling amongst those of another, when swords were half unsheathed, but all ended in making a face, or putting on a threatening aspect. We soon arrived before Coonia, the capital of the rebels of Goobur [Gobir], which was not above half a mile in diameter, being nearly circular, and built on the bank of one of the branches of the river, or lakes, which I have mentioned. Each chief, as he came up, took his station, which, I suppose, had previously been assigned to him. The number of fighting men brought before the town could not, I think, be less than fifty or sixty thousand, horse and foot, of which the foot amounted to more than nine-tenths. For the depth of two hundred yards, all round the walls was a dense circle of men and horses. The horse kept out of bow-shot, while the foot went up as they felt courage or inclination, and kept up a straggling fire with about thirty muskets, and the shooting of arrows. In front of the sultan, the Zegzeg [Zaria] troops had one French fusil: the Kano forces had forty-one muskets. These fellows, whenever they fired their pieces, ran out of bow-shot to load; all of them were slaves; not a single Fellata had a musket. The enemy kept up a slow and sure fight, seldom throwing away their arrows until they saw an opportunity of letting fly with effect. Now and then a single horse would gallop up to the ditch, and brandish his spear, the rider taking care to cover himself with his large leathern shield, and return as fast as he went, generally calling out lustily, when he got among his own party,

¹ From Clapperton, *Second Expedition*, pp. 185–8. This passage is included in a longer extract from Clapperton quoted in C. Howard and J. H. Plumb, *West African Explorers*, Oxford, 1951, pp. 270–5. The battle described here took place on 16 Oct. 1826. During Muhammad Bello's reign the Sokoto Empire was involved in frequent conflicts with Gobir, which eventually suffered a crushing defeat at the battle of Gawakuke in 1835 (Hogben, *Muhammadan Emirates of Nigeria*, p. 115).

'Shields to the wall', 'You people of the Gadado, or Atego',¹ etc., 'Why don't you hasten to the wall?' To which some voices would cry out 'Oh, you have a good large shield to cover you'. The cry of 'Shields to the wall' was constantly heard from the several chiefs to their troops; but they disregarded the call, and neither chiefs nor vassals moved from the spot. At length the men in quilted armour went up 'per order'.² They certainly cut not a bad figure at a distance, as their helmets were ornamented with black and white ostrich feathers, and the sides of the helmets with pieces of tin, which glittered in the sun, their long quilted cloaks of gaudy colours reaching over part of the horses' tails, and hanging over the flanks. On the neck, even the horse's armour was notched, or vandyked, to look like a mane; on his forehead and over his nose was a brass or tin plate, as also a semicircular piece on each side. The rider was armed with a large spear; and he had to be assisted to mount his horse, as his quilted cloak was too heavy; it required two men to lift him on; and there were six of them belonging to each governor, and six to the sultan. I at first thought the foot would take advantage of going under cover of these unwieldy machines; but no, they went alone, as fast as the poor horses could bear them, which was but a slow pace. They had one musket in Coonia, and it did wonderful execution, for it brought down the van of the quilted men, who fell from his horse like a sack of corn thrown from a horse's back at a miller's door; but both horse and man were brought off by two or three footmen. He had got two balls through his breast; one went through his body and both sides of the tobe; the other went through and lodged in the quilted armour opposite the shoulders.

The cry of 'Allahu Akber' or 'God is great', was resounded through the whole army every quarter of an hour at least (this is the war-cry of the Fellatas); but neither this, nor 'Shields to the wall', nor 'Why don't the Gadado's people go up?', had any effect, except to produce a scuffle among themselves, when the chiefs would have to ride up and part their followers, who, instead of fighting against the enemy, were more likely to fight with one another. There were three Arabs of Ghadamis in the

¹ Atego, 'Atiku, later successor of Muhammad Bello as Sultan of Sokoto. See next extract, p. 221.

² On quilted armour, see Sect. III, p. 79.

army, armed at all points. Hameda, the sultan's merchant, was one. He was mounted on a fine black Tuarick [Tuareg] horse, armed with a spear and shield, an Arab musket, brace of pistols, blunderbuss, sword, and dagger. The other two, Abdelkrim, and Beni Omar, armed with musket, pistols, sword, and dagger. . . .

S A 'ĪD · *Sultans of Sokoto:*¹ *Muhammad Bello*²

. . . He was much occupied with composition, and whenever he composed anything he used to issue it to the people, and read it to them, then become occupied with another composition. The reasons for the large number of compositions were requests for information and points of disagreement. If he was asked about a question he composed a composition on it, and if it reached him that so-and-so and so-and-so were disagreeing on a matter he composed a composition on it. He used to urge his children, his brothers, and his nephews to learning, and blamed them much if they abandoned it. One day I heard him say that the Hausas mislead our children in telling them—'Your house is a saintly house', and in causing them to abstain from learning; that all that was a lie, deceit, falsehood, and incorrect, because knowledge is only attained by learning, and learned men are nearer to it than anyone.

. . . He spent from his own earnings and did not spend from the public Treasury. He had already said to his father at the start of their Holy War—'Shaikh, lawful resources are lacking, and it is essential that you should spend for necessary expenses from this money; but, as for myself, I will earn my own living, as I am a young man.' He was apprenticed to a craft, by means of which he became independent of the Treasury. Because of this he never prayed against anyone without their becoming like leaves devoured.³ So 'Ali Hāshim informed us. He was kind to the subjects, most merciful to them, patient, self-con-

¹ From Hājji Sa'id, *History of Sokoto*, translated by C. E. J. Whitting, Kano, n.d., pp. 11-12, 15-16, 22, 34-35. There is also a French translation of this work in O. Houdas, *Tedzkiret en-Nisian*, Paris, 1901. Hājji Sa'id was Qur'ānic reader to Aliyu, the third of the rulers of Sokoto referred to in this extract.

² See above, Sect. VII, pp. 196-205 and 213-15.

³ i.e. because God heard his prayers.

trolled, scrupulous concerning their property . . . and a good administrator. He scrutinised the judges, reversing their judgments which were dictated by their own interests; nor did he give them free rein in their posts. On account of this he said to his brother 'Atīqu—'If you judge according to the truth, I will not interfere with you. Be you on the side of truth wherever it is.' His description—ruddy, tall, bald, with a long thick beard, always veiled: he never removed the veil from his face. . . .

SA'ID · *Sultans of Sokoto: 'Atīqu'*

The first to put his hand in his ['Atīqu's]² was the Imam of the mosque, Bubakr; then Gidado; then the people took the oath in succession. . . . When they had taken the oath to him, the first words he said were—'Be sincere in your hearts with regard to the oath of allegiance. If you see me straying from the path of the Law, then set me straight on it, even with the stroke of a whip; and I too will set straight all who stray from the legal path, even if it were 'Ali son of Bello.' Then he added—'To-day something has fallen which cannot be picked up, for the he-goat cannot carry the load of the camel—but I will do as much as I can.' He issued many orders for good and prohibitions of the bad, and he changed many abuses which had developed in the administrative measures by means of which the Commander of the Faithful, Muhammad Bello, had ruled them. The first thing he did in this way was putting to death a Kettle-drummer in the middle of his playing; so that they abandoned that, and became such that you would not hear the sound of a drum, nor anything like it, save when the army was setting out on an expedition. Dissipation died in his reign to the extent that it was as though it had never been. On account of that the dissipated and the sultans hated him, but the learned and the upright loved him. . . . His description—ruddy, short, down-looking—he seldom raised his head—never parting from sword, spear, and bow; you would not see him without two of them in his hand, even when he was going into his house. . . .

¹ Abu Bakr 'Atīqu, son of 'Uthmān dan Fodio, who ruled from 1837 to 1842.

² i.e. to take the oath of allegiance.

SA'ID · *Sultans of Sokoto: 'Alīyu¹*

... As for his description—before his succession he was corpulent; then, after his succession, he became fine drawn. He was black, of medium height, with a gap between his front teeth, fond of laughter, with good features and a fine long beard, beloved by the people, beneficent to them. . . . No one could talk him into action against a poor wretch. . . . He did not dispute in theology with anyone without vanquishing him. He was wide awake in ordinary affairs, knowledgeable about current events and the reasons for disasters. Often have I heard him say—‘Such-and-such a disaster befell us because we did such-and-such, and through our doing such-and-such we have suffered such-and-such an event.’ He fulfilled family obligations, was kind to the sons of his paternal uncle, and in the matter of the marriages of all of them took the responsibility of helping them and advising them. . . . He did not leave off learning by night or day; excessively hated shedding blood, and was on his guard against that. He only put to death him whom the Law condemned. . . .

CLAPPERTON · *Yorubaland: The Town of Jannah [Ijana]²*

The town of Jannah stands on the side of a gentle hill, commanding an extensive view to the west; the view to the east is interrupted by thick woods. The inhabitants are apparently civil and industrious, and may amount from 8,000 to 10,000. They are great carvers; their doors, drums, and everything of wood is carved. It has formerly been surrounded by a wall and ditch: the gate and ditch are now all that remain. The streets are irregular and narrow, the houses occupying a large space. . . . Here, amongst the Yarribanies, is the poor dog treated with respect, and made the companion of man;³ here he has collars

¹ 'Alīyu Babba, son of Muhammad Bello, who ruled from 1842 to 1859.

² From Clapperton, *Second Expedition*, pp. 12–14. ‘Oyo collected tribute as far south as Ijana (Jannah), and was represented there by an Ajele who in 1830 was a Hausa slave of the Alafin’s’ (Philip Allison, ‘The Last Days of Old Oyo’, *Odu*, No. 4, 1957, p. 17).

³ Cf. Ulli Beier, ‘The Yoruba Attitude to Dogs’, in *Odu*, No. 7, 1959, pp. 31–37.

around his neck of different colours, and ornamented with cowries, and sits by his master, and follows him in all his journeys and visits. The great man is never without one, and it appeared to me a boy was appointed to take care of him. In no other country of Africa, that I have been in, is this faithful animal treated with common humanity. . . .

I cannot omit bearing testimony to the singular and perhaps unprecedented fact, that we have already travelled sixty miles in eight days, with numerous and heavy baggage, and about ten different relays of carriers, without losing so much as the value of a shilling public or private; a circumstance evincing not only somewhat more than common honesty in the inhabitants, but a degree of subordination and regular government which could not have been supposed to exist amongst a people hitherto considered barbarians. Humanity, however, is the same in every land; government may restrain the vicious principles of our nature, but it is beyond the power even of African despotism to silence a woman's tongue: in sickness and in health, and at every stage, we have been obliged to endure their eternal loquacity and noise.

We have observed several looms going here: in one house we saw eight or ten—in fact a regular manufactory. Their cloth is good in texture, and some very fine. They also manufacture earthenware, but prefer European, though they sometimes misappropriate the different articles. The vessel in which the caboceer of Laboo presented us water to drink, Mr. Houtson recognised as a handsome chamber-pot sold by him last year at Badagry. . . .

CLAPPERTON · *Yorubaland: A Yoruba Pantomime*¹

It is the custom, during the time that the caboceers from the different towns remain on their visit to the king, to act plays or pantomimes, or whatever they may be called. I shall attempt a description of the one I saw to-day. The place chosen for this pastime is the king's park, fronting the principal door where his

¹ From Clapperton, *Second Expedition*, pp. 53–56 (quoted in Howard and Plumb, *West African Explorers*, pp. 266–8). The performance described here was given at Old Oyo (Katunga) in 1826.

majesty usually sits. A fetish house occupies the left side; to the south are two very romantic and large blocks of granite, by the side of which is an old withered tree. On the east are some beautiful shady trees; and on the north his majesty's house, from whence he views the scene. In the centre are two beautiful clumps of trees; in one of which is a tall fan-palm, overlooking the whole area, a space that may include some seven or eight hundred yards square. Under these clumps of trees were seated the actors, dressed in large sacks, covering every part of the body; the head most fantastically decorated with strips of rags, damask silk, and cotton, of as many glaring colours as it was possible. The king's servants attended to keep the peace, and to prevent the crowd from breaking into the square in which the actors were assembled. Musicians also attended with drums, horns, and whistles, which were beaten and blown without intermission.

The first act consisted in dancing and tumbling in sacks, which they performed to admiration, considering they could not see, and had not the free use of their feet and hands. The second act consisted in catching the *boa-constrictor*: first, one of the sack-men came in front and knelt down on his hands and feet; then came out a tall majestic figure, having on a head-dress and masque which baffle all description: it was of a glossy black colour, sometimes like a lion couchant over the crest of a helmet; at another like a black head with a large wig: at every turn he made it changed its appearance. This figure held in its right hand a sword, and by its superior dress and motions appeared to be the director of the scene, for not a word was spoken by the actors. The manager, as I shall call the tall figure, then came up to the man who was lying in the sack; another sack-dancer was brought in his sack, who by a wave of the sword was laid down at the other's head or feet; he having unsewn the end of both sacks, the two crawled into one. There was now great waving of the manager's sword; indeed I thought that heads were going to be taken off, as all the actors were assembled round the party lying down; but in a few minutes they all cleared away except the manager, who gave two or three flourishes with his sword, when the representation of the *boa-constrictor* began. The animal put its head out of the bag in which it was contained, attempting to bite the manager; but at

a wave of the sword it threw its head in another direction to avert the blow; it then began gradually to creep out of the bag, and went through the motions of a snake in a very natural manner, though it appeared to be rather full in the belly; opening and shutting its mouth, which I suspect was the performer's two hands, in the most natural manner imaginable. The length of the creature was spun out to about fourteen feet; and the colour and action were well represented by a covering of painted cloth, imitating that of the boa. After following the manager round the park for some time, and attempting to bite him, which he averted by a wave of the sword, a sign was made for the body of actors to come up; when the manager approaching the tail, made flourishes with his sword as if hacking in that part of the body. The snake gasped, twisted up, and seemed as if in great torture; and when nearly dead, it was shouldered by the masqued actors, still gasping and making attempts to bite, but was carried off in triumph to the fetish house.

The third act consisted of the white devil. The actors having retired to some distance in the background, one of them was left in the centre, whose sack falling gradually down, exposed a white head, at which all the crowd gave a shout, that rent the air; they appeared indeed to enjoy this sight, as the perfection of the actor's art. The whole body was at last cleared of the encumbrance of the sack, when it exhibited the appearance of a human figure cast in white wax, of the middle size, miserably thin, and starved with cold. It frequently went through the motion of taking snuff, and rubbing its hands; when it walked, it was with the most awkward gait, treading as the most tender-footed white man would do in walking bare-footed, for the first time, over new-frozen ground. The spectators often appealed to us, as to the excellence of the performance, and entreated I would look and be attentive to what was going on. I pretended to be fully as much pleased with this caricature of a white man as they could be, and certainly the actor burlesqued the part to admiration. This being concluded, the performers all retired to the fetish house. Between each act, we had choral songs by the king's women, in which the assembled crowd joined their voices.

LANDER · *Yorubaland: The Governor's Widow*¹

It is the custom here, when a governor dies, for two of his favourite wives to quit the world on the same day, in order that he may have a little pleasant, social company in a future state; but the late governor's devoted wives had no ambition or inclination to follow their venerable husband to the grave, and went and hid themselves before the funeral ceremonies were performed, and have remained concealed ever since with the remainder of his women. Today, however, one of these unfortunates—she to whom our house belongs—was discovered in her hiding-place at the present governor's, and the alternative of a poisoned chalice, or to have her head broken by the club of the fetish-priest, was offered her. She has chosen the former mode of dying, as being the less terrible of the two, and has come to our yard to spend her last hours in the society of her faithful slaves. These address their mistress by the endearing name of mother. Poor creatures; as soon as they learnt her misfortune, they dropped their spinning; the grinding of corn was also relinquished; their sheep, goats, and poultry were suffered to roam at large without restraint; and they abandoned themselves to the most excessive, most poignant, grief; but now the arrival of their mistress has added, if possible, to their affliction. Females have been coming all day to condole with the old lady, and to weep with her; so that we have heard and seen nothing but sobbing and crying from morning till the setting of the sun. The principal males in the town have likewise been here to pay their last respects to their mistress; and so has her grave-digger, who has just risen from prostrating himself on the ground before her. Notwithstanding the representations and remonstrances of the priest, and the prayers of the venerable victim to her gods

¹ From Richard and John Lander, *Journal of an Expedition to explore the Course and Termination of the Niger*, London, 1832, i, pp. 92–94. Richard Lander (1804–34) was a Cornishman, born at Truro; he accompanied Clapperton on his second expedition (1825–7) as a manservant; after Clapperton's death he continued the attempt to explore the course of the Niger on his own account. In 1830–1 he returned, with his younger brother John, and together they successfully followed the Niger from Bussa to the sea. In 1832–4 he acted as guide to Macgregor Laird's Niger expedition, was wounded in a skirmish, and died at Fernando Po. See further extracts from, and notes on, the Landers in Perham and Simmons, *African Discovery*, pp. 97–125, and Philip Allison, 'The Last Days of Old Oyo' (in *Odu*, No. 4, pp. 16–27).

for fortitude to undergo the dreadful ordeal, her resolution has forsaken her more than once. She has entered our yard twice to expire in the arms of her women, and twice has she laid aside the fatal poison, in order to take another walk, and gaze once more on the splendour of the sun and the glory of the heavens, for she cannot bear the idea of losing sight of them for ever. . . . Meanwhile her grave is preparing, and preparations are making for a wake at her funeral. She is to be buried here in one of her own huts the moment after the spirit has quitted the body, which will be ascertained by striking the ground near which it may be lying at the time, when, if no motion or struggle ensues, the old woman will be considered as dead. The poison used by the natives on this occasion destroys life, it is said, in fifteen minutes.

LANDER · *Yorubaland: Yoruba Mothers*¹

Many women with little wooden figures of children on their heads passed us in the course of the morning—mothers who, having lost a child, carry such rude imitations of them about their persons for an indefinite time as a symbol of mourning. None of them could be induced to part with one of these little affectionate memorials. . . . The mortality of children must be immense indeed here, for almost every woman we met with on the road, had one or more of these little wooden images. Whenever the mothers stopped to take refreshment, a small part of their food was invariably presented to the lips of these inanimate memorials.

LANDER · *Old Oyo in Decline*²

It has been expressly and repeatedly told us, that the monarch of this empire is brother to the king of Benin;³ but, notwithstanding this near relationship of the two sovereigns, not the slightest intercourse or communication is maintained between

¹ From R. and J. Lander, *Journal*, i, pp. 107 and 113. (See Plate 9a.)

² From R. and J. Lander, *Journal*, i, pp. 176–90.

³ On the links between Oyo and Benin, see Sect. I, pp. 62–64.

Yarriba and that power; so at least the inhabitants of this place have informed us; and the reason they ascribe for it is, that the distance between the countries is too great. . . .

All seems quiet and peaceable in this large, dull city;¹ and one cannot help feeling rather melancholy, in wandering through streets almost deserted, and over a vast extent of fertile land, on which there is no human habitation, and scarcely a living thing to animate or cheer the prevailing solemnity. The walls of the town have been suffered to fall into decay; and are now no better than a heap of dust and ruins; and such unconcern and apathy pervade the minds of the monarch and his ministry, that the wandering and ambitious Falatah [Fulani] has penetrated into the very heart of the country, made himself master of two of its most important and flourishing towns, with little, if any, opposition; and is gradually, but very perceptibly, gaining on the lukewarm natives of the soil, and sapping the foundations of the throne of Yarriba. . . .

They [the Fulani] have entrenched themselves in strong walled towns; and have recently forced from Mansolah² a declaration of their independence, whilst this negligent and imbecile monarch beholds them gnawing away the very sinews of his strength, without making the slightest exertion to apply a remedy to the evil, or prevent their future aggrandizement. Besides Ráka, which is peopled wholly by Falatahs, who have strengthened it amazingly, and rendered it exceedingly populous, another town of prodigious size has lately sprung into being, which already far surpasses Katunga in wealth, population, and extent. It was at first resorted to by a party of Falatahs, who named it Alórie,³ and encouraged all the slaves in the country to flee from the oppression of their masters, and join their standard. They reminded the slaves of the constraint under which they laboured, and tempted them by an offer of freedom and protection, and other promises of the most extravagant nature, to declare themselves independent of Yarriba. Accordingly, the discontented many miles round eagerly flocked to Alorie in considerable numbers, where they were well received.

¹ Old Oyo, always referred to as Katunga by the Landers, the capital of the former Oyo Empire.

² The Alafin of Oyo: Johnson, in his *History of the Yorubas*, calls this Alafin Majotu.

³ Ilorin, about fifty miles south-south-east of Old Oyo.

This took place as far back as forty years,¹ since which, other Falatahs have joined their countrymen from Soccatoo [Sokoto] and Rabba [Raba];² and notwithstanding the wars (if mutual kidnapping deserves the name) in which they have been engaged in the support and maintenance of their cause, Alorie is become by far the largest and most flourishing city in Yarriba, not even excepting the capital itself. It is said to be two days' journey—that is, forty or fifty miles, in circumference, and to be fortified by a strong clay wall with moats. The inhabitants have now vast herds and flocks, and upwards of three thousand horses; which last will appear a very considerable number, when it is considered that Katunga does not contain more than as many hundreds. . . .

Perhaps few despots sully their dignity by condescending to consult the inclination of their subjects, in personally communicating to them their most private as well as public concerns. Yet, the sovereign of Yarriba appears to be so obliging, as to make this a common practice. In return, however, the people are expected and compelled to satisfy the curiosity of their prince by adopting a similar line of conduct towards him; and all the presents they receive from strangers, how trifling soever they may be, are, in every instance, taken to his residence for inspection. Every thing, indeed, that relates to their personal interests, and all their domestic concerns, he listens to with the most patriarchal gravity. Thus, our present to the King has been exhibited to his people two or three times; Ebo's³ also, and those of the head men, have been shown to them as well as to their sovereign. . . . If a stranger, from a remote part of the empire, wishes to visit Katunga, in order to pay his respects to his sovereign, the chief or governor of every town through which he may happen to pass is obliged to furnish him with any number of carriers he may require; and in this manner his goods are conveyed from village to village, until he arrives at the capital. A similar indulgence is likewise extended to any governor who may have the like object in view. . . .

¹ An exaggeration; the revolt of Ilorin under the leadership of Afonja against the Alafin took place in about 1817 (Hogben, *The Muhammadan Emirates of Nigeria*, pp. 151–4).

² Capital of Nupe. See below Sect. VII, pp. 239–43.

³ The Alafin's 'chief eunuch', responsible for the Landers' entertainment.

LANDER · *Ibo Society*:¹ *King Obie [Obi]*

In this manner was the time beguiled, till we heard a door suddenly opened on our right, and the dreaded *Obie*, King of the Eboe [Ibo] country, stood before us. And yet there was nothing so very dreadful in his appearance after all, for he is a sprightly young man, with a mild open countenance, and an eye which indicates quickness, intelligence and good-nature, rather than the ferocity which we had been told he possesses in an eminent degree. He received us with a smile of welcome, and shook hands with infinite cordiality, often complimenting us with the word 'yes' to which his knowledge of English is confined, and which no doubt he had been tutored to pronounce for the occasion. Several attendants followed their sovereign, most of whom were unarmed, and almost naked, and three little boys were likewise in attendance, whose office it was to fan him when desired.

The dress of the King of the Eboe country somewhat resembles that which is worn, on state occasions, by the monarch of Yarriba. Its appearance was altogether *brilliant*; and from the vast profusion of coral ornaments with which he was decorated, *Obie* might not inappropriately be styled 'the Coral King'; such an idea at all events entered our minds, as we contemplated the monarch, sitting on his throne of clay. His head was graced with a cap, shaped like a sugar-loaf, and covered thickly with strings of coral and pieces of broken looking-glass, so as to hide the materials of which it was made; his neck, or rather throat, was encircled with several strings of the same kind of bead, which were fastened so tightly, as in some degree to affect his respiration, and to give his throat and cheeks an inflated appearance. In opposition to these were

¹ From R. and J. Lander, *Journal*, iii, pp. 176-8, 214-16, and 161-3. The interest of these extracts lies partly in the fact that before 1830, when the Landers made their successful journey down the Niger, European contacts with Ibos had been restricted to the Ibos of the diaspora. *Obi Assai*, who is described in the first extract, was not, as the Landers supposed, 'King of the Ibos', but King of Abo, which at this time 'exercised what amounted to a monopoly of trade up and down the Niger valley' (Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta*, p. 26). The institution of 'semi-divine kingship' and the use of coral ornaments reflect Benin influence in Abo at an earlier period (see Introduction, p. 25). *Addizetta* is described as King *Obi's* 'favourite daughter'. For 'the silent trade' elsewhere in West Africa, see Bovill, *Golden Trade of the Moors*, pp. 82-83.

four or five others hanging round his neck and reaching almost to his knees. He wore a short Spanish surtout of red cloth, which fitted close to his person, being much too small. It was ornamented with gold epaulettes, and the front of it was overspread with gold lace, but which, like the cap, was entirely concealed, unless on a close examination, owing to the vast quantity of coral which was fastened to it in strings. Thirteen or fourteen bracelets (for we had the curiosity to count them) decorated each wrist, and to give them full effect, a few inches of the sleeves of the coat had been cut off purposely. The beads were fastened to the wrist with old copper buttons, which formed an odd contrast to them. The King's trousers, composed of the same material as his coat, stuck as closely to the skin as that, and was similarly embroidered, but it reached no further than the middle of his legs, and the lower part of it being ornamented like the wrists, and with precisely the same number of strings of beads; besides which, a string of little brass bells encircled each leg above the ankles, for the feet were naked. Thus splendidly clothed, Obie, smiling at his own magnificence, vain of the admiration which was paid him by his attendants, and flattered without doubt by the presence of white men, who he imagined were struck with amazement at the splendour of his appearance, shook his feet for the bells to tinkle, sat down with the utmost self-complacency, and looked around him. . . .

LANDER · *Ibo Society: Addizetta*

Addizetta may be between twenty and thirty years of age, or perhaps younger, for she takes snuff, and females arrive at womanhood in warm countries much sooner than in cold ones. Her person is tall, stout, and well-proportioned, though it has not dignity sufficient to be commanding; her countenance is round and open, but dull, and almost inexpressive; mildness of manners, evenness of temper, and inactivity of body also, might notwithstanding, I think, be clearly defined in it; on the whole she had a perfect virginity of face, which betrays not the smallest symptom of feeling. Her forehead is smooth and shining as polished ebony, but it is rather too low to be noble; her eyes full, large, and beautiful, though languid; her cheeks of a

Dutch-like breadth and fulness; her nose finely compressed, but not quite so distinguished a feature as the negro nose in general; there is a degree of prettiness about her mouth, the lips not being disagreeably large, which is further embellished by a set of elegant teeth, perfectly even and regular, and white as the teeth of a greyhound: her chin—but I am unable to describe a chin; I only know that it agrees very well with the other features of her face.

Addizetta seldom laughs, but smiles or simpers most engagingly whenever she is more than ordinarily pleased; and she seems not to be unconscious of the powerful influence which these smiles have over the mind of her husband. Her dress and personal ornaments may be described in a few words; the former consisting simply in a piece of coloured silk, encircling the waist, and extending as far as the knees; her woolly hair, which is tastefully braided, is enclosed in a net, and ends in a peak at the top; the net is adorned, but not profusely, with coral beads, strings of which hang from the crown to the forehead. She wears necklaces of the same costly bead; copper rings encircle her fingers and great toes, bracelets of ivory her wrists, and enormous rings, also of elephants tusks, decorate her legs, near the ankles, by which she is almost disabled from walking, on account of their ponderous weight and immense size. I had almost finished the scrutiny of her person, when Addizetta, observing me regarding her with more than common attention, at length caught my eye, and turned away her head with a triumphant kind of smile, as much as to say ‘Aye, white man, you may well admire and adore my person; I perceive you are struck with my beauty, and no wonder neither’.

LANDER · *Ibo Society: The Silent Trade in Yams*

The object of our visit was to purchase yams, and our people had succeeded in getting the villagers to bring some down to the canoes. These people, however, had armed themselves either with a gun or sword, and had no women among them, excepting [one old one who appeared to be of consequence]. Having arrived at the bank of the river, the old woman directed all the yams to be placed in a row before our people, and in distinct

and separate bundles, and the owners to retire a short distance, which order was implicitly obeyed. The purchaser now inspected the bundles, and having selected one to his satisfaction which might contain the finest yams, placed what he considered to be its value by the side of it, consisting of cloth, flints, etc. The old lady looking on all the time, if in her opinion it was sufficient to give, takes up the cloth and gives it to the owner of the bundle, and the purchaser likewise takes away the yams. But on the contrary, if the cloth, or whatever was thus offered by the purchaser, is not considered sufficient by the old woman, she allows it to remain a short time to give him an opportunity of adding something else to his offer. If this were not done, the owner of the yams was directed by the old woman to take them back and move them back out of the way, leaving what had been offered for them to be taken away also. All this was carried on without a word passing between the parties, and the purchase of a sufficient number of yams by our people occupied three hours. It was something quite novel to see two large parties of people bartering commodities in this manner; and the apparent unconcern and determination with which the old woman held out, when she considered the price offered for the yams not sufficient, was quite amusing. She knew our men must have yams; and with an ill grace they added anything to what they had already offered. The scene before us was altogether extraordinary. Many of the people belonging to the canoes were standing in a group on the bank of the river near them with muskets, swords, and spears in their hands; some with the articles with which they were about to make a purchase. A quantity of yams, arranged in large bundles, placed in a row, separated them from another group, consisting of the villagers also armed, and both parties standing at a short distance from them, leaving a considerable space between. Here was stationed the old woman, who, with no little consequence, directed the whole affair by signs, either to her own party or ours, not a word being spoken by anyone.

We could not help thinking, that everything, in the largest market we have seen, might have been disposed in the time required for purchasing these yams, and that only ten days' journey up the river such a market would be found. This method of trading must have arisen either from the fear of quarrelling,

or from not understanding each other's language, which is difficult to suppose; but it seems to have been instituted by mutual agreement, for both parties understood how they were to act. This is the first time we have witnessed it.

JACKSON · *King Opulu of Bonny, 1826*¹

King Peppel [Pepple] having repeatedly sent presents by his Canoes to the King of Warre [Warri], with whose nation he carries on an immense trade (there being navigable Creeks, that lead from Bonny to that Country), the latter, hearing of his amazing wealth and extensive connections with the Europeans, offered him his eldest daughter in Marriage—an honour for the first time granted to a black Man, he having at least One Hundred daughters, who are all doomed to live in a state of celibacy, in consequence of their imperious Father refusing to ally them with any but whites, he himself being a collateral branch of the Benin Family who are literally descended from an European, who founded that rich and extensive Kingdom.² So great and unexpected an offer was received by Peppel with the greatest exultation, and to convince his intended Ally how deeply he appreciated the distinguished favor he had conferred upon him, he loaded Canoe after Canoe with most rare and valuable treasures. English, French, Spanish, and Portugueeze Merchandise were extracted from his warehouses, Gold and Silver Plate, costly Silks and exquisitely fine Cloths, with embroidered laces and other articles too numerous to mention, were laid at the King of Warre's feet. Indeed to use Peppel's own expression, spoken in evident sincerity, 'Not you three Ship Cargo' (Alluding to the *Bridget*, *Sir Walter Scott*, and *Huskisson*) 'would come up to what I give my Queen Father'.

¹ From R. M. Jackson, *Journal of a Voyage to Bonny River on the West Coast of Africa*, Letchworth, 1934, pp. 135–6 and 78. Richard Mather Jackson (1801–26?) visited Bonny from January to July 1826, with an interval in the Cameroons, while serving as surgeon on board the ship *Kingston*. He is believed to have died at sea later in the same year. The King Pepple referred to here is Opulu the Great, who reigned from 1792 to 1830 (see Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta*, pp. 68–9).

² A reference, presumably, to the European marriages of the Warri ruling dynasty in the seventeenth century (see Sect. V, pp. 131 and 138–40). The traditional founder of the Warri Kingdom was Giniwa, the son of an Oba of Benin (P. C. Lloyd, *The Itsekiri*, p. 179).

On receipt of this extraordinary addition to his almost exhausted stores, the Chief of Warre announced to Peppel his intention to escort his Daughter himself to Bonny, and sojourn with his Son in Law some days. This was indeed a new epoch in the annals of Bonny, and immediate preparations were made for the reception of the royal Guest. I cannot convey a better description of this visit than by giving King Peppel's own words.

'That time I first hear, Warre's Canoe come for Creek, I fire one Gun from my house—then all Bonny fire—plenty powder blow away you no can hear one man speak—I stand for my house—all my floor have fine cloth—roof, walls, all round, be hung with proper fine Silks—no possible to look one stick—one mat—all be covered. My Queen Father stand for beach—his foot no touch ground—he stand on cloth—all way he walk, he walk for cloth. My people put cloth for his foot, wher-ever he go. He no speak one word to my Mates—he come for my house—I have one proper fine chair for him—it be covered with silk. That time he put foot for my house—gun fire—through all Town—that time he shake hand for me, Gun fire again—he bring his daughter, my Queen for he hand I look her—she be proper fine Woman, just come up. That time I put my hand for her neck, Gun fire again—I be glad too much. I give Wine—Brandy—plenty puncheon—pass twenty, I give for my people and Warre's. All Bonny glad too much. My Queen Father, walk for Bonny—he no can put he foot for ground—he walk for cloth. Every Man—every Woman, for my Town, I give Cloth—pass one tousand piece, I give that day—pass twenty Barrel Powder, I fire that day. Big looking Glass hang for Bonny—plenty live for Town—Warre no can walk, but he look him-self for Glass. Well, then I go for Jujew House—I marry my Queen—we dance all day—Oh there be plenty good thing that day.' . . .

. . . We passed a very pleasant afternoon, during which I was surprised to hear so much good sense proceeding from the lips of an untutored Negro [King Peppel], who in the course of conversation made many pertinent remarks, evidently shewing that he possesses a shrewd intellect and a most retentive recollection. Indeed, when it is considered that, without the assistance of the slightest education, he transacts business with thirteen Vessels now laying here (and often there are many

more), all the concerns of which, however minute and complicated, he carefully bears in his remembrance, never forgetting what he promises to do for them, nor omitting to send for what they promise him; and the traffic with them naturally leading to the dispatch of Trade in the interior, by bartering their Merchandise for Oil, Ivory, and Slaves, all passing thro' his hands and under his own observation—one cannot sufficiently eulogise his extraordinary abilities. In fact, his generally admitted correctness in all points of business excites the wonder and claims the admiration of all who know him. If you speak of the Slave Trade, and the Ships which were formerly sent out from Liverpool to engage it, name but a Vessel, and he will instantly recollect her Commander, how long she lay in Bonny, how many times she traded there, what number of Slaves she carried, etc., etc.

From enquiries I find that, as an absolute Sovereign over an ignorant and superstitious race, he is admirably adapted for his situation, never wavering but always decisive in his commands; though possessing power the most despotic, he tempers justice with mercy, altho' a crime never escapes punishment. He is kind too to his people, pitying them when sick, and ameliorating their condition. His manners are likewise conciliatory, and on the whole he is very well liked, tho' very much feared, by the natives—indeed, the best criterion that such is the case, may be inferred from the fact of his having reigned unmolested so many years. . . .

CRAIGIE · *A Conference with King Pepple*,¹ 1839

King Pepple of Bonny, accompanied by Anna Pepple,² by his Juju man or high priest, and Hee Chee, Anna Pepple's secretary,

¹ From a dispatch from Commander Robert Craigie, of Her Majesty's ship *Scout*, to the Commander-in-chief on the Cape of Good Hope and African station, published in *Papers relating to Engagements entered into by King Pepple and the Chiefs of Bonny with Her Majesty's Naval Officers on the subject of the suppression of the Slave Trade* (C. July 11, 1848). King William Dappa Pepple, referred to here, was born in 1817, and ascended the Bonny throne in 1835 (K. O. Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta*, ch. iv).

² 'Anna Pepple'—the name used by Craigie to refer to Alali, former Regent of Bonny, and head of the Anna (or Hanno) Pepple House, deposed by Craigie in April 1837 (Dike, op. cit., pp. 71 and 77).

for the first time went on board a man-of-war, for the purpose of paying a visit to Captain Craigie, where he was received with the usual salutes. . . . When the King and suite had finished breakfast, Captain Craigie presented to His Majesty a box containing presents from the English Government, which the King desired might be opened. . . .

Captain Craigie then proceeded to read to King Pepple and suite the despatch of Lord Palmerston date 14th April, 1838, relative to slave abolition, and strongly impressed upon His Majesty that part which states that treaties had already been made between England and other African Princes for the purpose of putting an end to the Slave Trade, and that in those cases the Articles of Treaty had been faithfully maintained.

Captain Craigie assured the King that England ever dispensed justice, and would encourage the lawful commerce of the Bonny in every way; that she would send out ships in abundance for their palm-oil and other products; and if the Bonny men directed their attention properly to these, he was certain they could easily get rich without exporting slaves. . . .

The King, Anna Pepple, and the Juju man for some time remained silent; their countenances, however, were indicative of their consternation; the idea of making such a proposal seemed to them to be incomprehensible. At length Anna Pepple said—‘If we cease to sell slaves to foreign ships, our principal source of wealth will be gone; the English were our first customers, and the trade has since been our chief means of support.’

Captain Craigie. ‘How much would you lose if you gave up selling slaves for exportation?’

Anna Pepple. ‘Too much—very much—we gain more by one slave-ship than by five palm-oil ships.’

Hee Chee, Anna Pepple’s Secretary. ‘We depend entirely on selling slaves and palm-oil for our subsistence; suppose then the Slave Trade done away with, the consumption of palm-oil in England to stop, the crop to fail, or that the English ships did not come to Bonny, what are we to do? We must starve, as it is contrary to our religion to cultivate the ground.’

Captain Craigie. ‘There need be no apprehension of the demand for palm-oil in England ceasing, or of English ships not coming out to the Bonny to take from you your products in exchange for British merchandize; but if you can shew clearly that your

losses will be so great by giving up slave exportation, I think it possible that the Queen of England may in some measure remunerate you for your loss. . . .'

Juju Man. 'Suppose a Spanish ship's coming to Bonny with goods to exchange for slaves; are we to send her away? This morning you made a breakfast for me, and as I was hungry it would have been foolish not to have eaten; in like manner, if the Spanish ship had things which we stood in need of, it would be equally foolish not to take them.'

Captain Craigie. 'How would the abolition of slave importation so materially affect you?'

King Pepple. 'It would affect myself and chiefs thus—

'First, by stopping the revenues arising from slaves being exported.

'Second, Our own profit on slaves, and that arising from piloting slave ships up to and out of Bonny, would be lost.'

Captain Craigie. 'I again assure you that the Slave Trade must be stopped. Not one vessel can escape from the Bonny, as you will know from the "Scout's" blockade of the river in 1836 and 1839. If it becomes necessary, I shall anchor a vessel off Juju Point, and to pass her you are aware will be impossible; but as the English Government always adopt the principle of putting an end to evils by friendly agreement rather than by compulsion, and as it is possible that they may be disposed, if your requests are within reasonable limits, to make you an annual "dash", or remuneration, for a term of years (perhaps five years), how much would you consider to be sufficient?'

After some consultation among themselves, Hee Chee, Anna Pepple's Secretary, said, 'the King will take 4,000 dollars yearly.'

Captain Craigie. 'As I said before, I am not authorized to treat for any sum, but I am certain that 4,000 dollars would be considered too much; indeed I would not venture to propose more than 2,000 dollars. If you say that this sum (for the time above specified) will be sufficient, I shall lay the matter before the English Government.'

The King, Anna Pepple, the Juju man, and Hee Chee, had a discussion for some time. They for a long while insisted on not naming less than 3,000 dollars, till they at last came down to 2,000; and when Captain Craigie proposed that it should be

named to the other chiefs on shore, they said that it was not necessary, as the King's party could carry any measure they thought proper. . . .¹

Signed Robert Craigie
(Commandant and Senior Officer.)

LAIRD AND OLDFIELD · *Raba: The Nupe Capital*²

As we rapidly approached the town, it appeared to be situated on the slope of a rising ground; and the houses being built one above the other, impart to it the appearance of an amphitheatre. With the aid of a glass we could discern an amazing crowd of natives assembled on the banks; but, what was more in accordance with our wishes, we could distinguish horses, cows, bullocks, sheep and goats. As we drew nearer, we found the city to be of immense extent, with villages all round the suburbs. . . .

The King's houses are between thirty and forty in number (each of which is surmounted by an ostrich's egg), and are situate about a mile and a half from the water-side, and inclosed by a very high wall, constructed of mud and red sand. . . . The outer apartment was the palaver-house, where the chiefs and princes assemble. As we passed through it, there were upwards of one hundred, seated cross-legged, *à la Turque*, together with a great number of Arabs. They appeared to be respectably dressed, and all of them wore a piece of white muslin around their heads, one end of which they brought round over the mouth, and left nothing but the eyes exposed. . . .

. . . It was not until a considerable time elapsed that we could

¹ By the 1839 Treaty, which followed this palaver, Bonny agreed to abolish the slave-trade, 'provided they should obtain from the British Government, for five years, an annual present of the value of 2,000 dollars'. For the history of these still-born Bonny treaties, see Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta*, ch. v.

² From M. Laird and R. A. K. Oldfield, *Narrative of an Expedition into the Interior of Africa by the River Niger in 1832-4*, London, 1837, ii, pp. 54-94. Macgregor Laird (1808-61), younger son of William Laird, founder of the Birkenhead firm of ship-builders, built the *Alburka*—the 55-ton paddle-wheel steamer in which this expedition was undertaken—and himself accompanied the expedition, with its very heavy loss of life. Later Laird was one of the promoters of the British and American Steam Navigation Company, formed to run steamers from England to New York, and started the African Steamship Company to develop communications and trade with West Africa. In 1854 he financed and fitted out the expedition of the *Pleiad* up the Niger and Benue, which Baikie led and in which Crowther took part (see below, Sect. VIII, pp. 268-72).

discover which really was his majesty.... At length we discovered [him] in the person of Osiman, son of Mallam Dendo.¹ He wore a very common robe, with a piece of muslin over his mouth and nose, which he never attempted to move, but inserted his fingers under his turban, to allow free motion to speak. Close beside him were his sandals, and a silver pot, containing some Goora [kola] nuts, which he dealt out with a liberal hand. His manners were dignified and imposing, his conversation free and easy, and his remarks shrewd and sensible. . . . He was rather good-looking about the eyes, which were dark and piercing; and these were nearly all of his countenance that we could discover. . . .

In the afternoon . . . we . . . were conducted to the house of the King's daughter, the Princess of Rabbah, situate near the outskirts of the city. We found everything remarkably neat and clean: calabashes were placed all round the apartment in the same manner that wooden bowls or platters are ranged in a dairy in old England.... The lady appeared to be about twenty-eight or thirty years of age, with a remarkably small hand and foot; I never met with one so exceedingly small. She was reclining on a mat in one corner, with a curtain before her, when we arrived. . . .

. . . We visited Mallam Dendo. He is an old man, apparently about eighty, but said to be a hundred and fifteen; and notwithstanding he appeared in a state of starvation, he gave us some Goora nuts and a sealed pot of honey. The King seemed very glad to see us . . . and inquired if our motive for coming was war; and being answered in the negative, he appeared perfectly satisfied. . . .

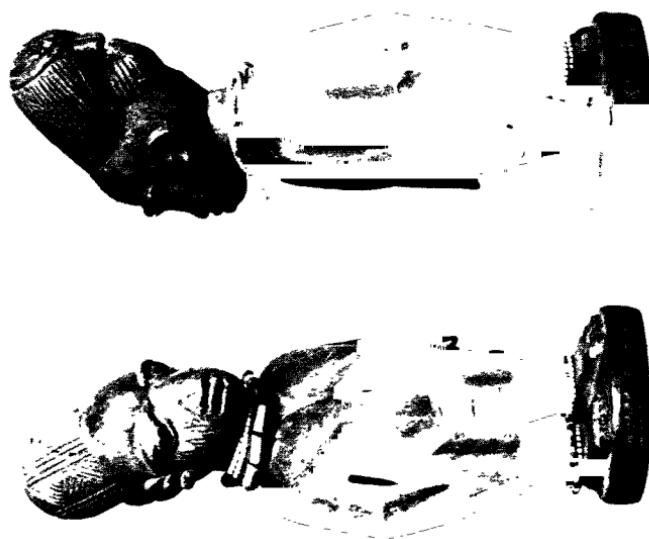
. . . I was desired to wait on the King with some fancy ball-dresses, trimmed with ears of corn, and gold and silver wire. The King admired the trimmings, wanted them to ornament his war-dresses with, and desired me to leave them for the tailor's examination. He . . . did not appear to like the opening at the back, although, as I told him, it was customary for all English ladies to wear them so. He seemed exceedingly puzzled how they could possibly secure them behind, and wished them to open in front like . . . tobes.

¹ Usman Zaki, who later became first Fulani *Etsu* of Nupe, ruling from 1836 to 1841 and again from 1850 to 1859 (Nadel, *A Black Byzantium*, pp. 80–82).



(b) Wooden figure of a Shango woman
devotee or priestess

From *Figures in Wood of West Africa*, Leon
Underwood. Alec Tirant Ltd.



(a) Yoruba twin figures, in wood

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PLATE 10



Procession to Ibu

From *Picturesque Views on the Niger*, Commander Allen, 1840

... Al Hadge ... informed us of the death of Mallam Dendo. He expired at the precise moment when we fired our morning gun, eight o'clock. ... A messenger was sent to the King to condole with him for his loss. ... Osiman sent word that he felt our kindness and was obliged to us, but that God had taken his father away. He asked our messenger Mina, 'Why don't you stay with us, who are your countrymen, and not go with the Christian dogs and unbelievers?'—'It is well known', says he, 'that in their own country they eat black men, and dye red cloth with their blood. Besides, they know nothing—not even Allah (God); and after our death, they are our slaves in Paradise!'

... The city of Rabbah contains a population of nearly forty thousand, natives of Houssa [Hausa], Yarriba [Yoruba], Ibbodo [Ibadan], and the Nufie [Nupe] countries. Their religion is pagan and Mahomedan. ... The Felatahs [Fulani] of Rabbah subsist by plundering the weak towns and levying contributions on them. Rabbah is governed by a King or chief, and several elder Mallams. ... Before undertaking anything important or declaring war, the King is obliged to summon a council of Mallams and the principal people. When his people are successful, which is too frequently the case, the spoils are divided; the King reserving to himself the greatest share. On our first visit it was a matter of some difficulty to ascertain who was really King, owing to the African policy of concealing him from strangers until their views and intentions are known to be peaceful. ... Osiman, the present King ... son to Mallam Dendo ... was reported to be a great and successful warrior, and appeared to be respected by his soldiers.

Rabbah is tributary to Sultan Bello of Soccatoo [Sokoto], who occasionally sends soldiers to assist the Rabbah army in plundering excursions. King Osiman frequently urged the necessity of our going to Soccatoo overland, to visit Bello, who, he assured us, 'would be glad to see us and give us anything our hearts wished for'. The King of Rabbah can command five thousand cavalry and twenty thousand infantry. He is daily purchasing horses to add to his troops, who are armed with poisoned arrows and spears, which they hurl with unerring aim a considerable distance. The soldiers also wear knives inside their arms, buckled round the wrist, and also swords slung

carelessly over the left shoulder—which latter are brought from Tripoli by the Arabs. . . .

The army of Rabbah is composed of liberated slaves, whose freedom is granted on consideration of their taking up arms. In the winter or wet season they follow their ordinary occupations; and in the summer or dry season, when the Quorra [Niger] is low, they assemble from all parts of the Kingdom of Houssa, Soccatoo, Kano, etc. They travel very quickly, taking the unsuspecting inhabitants by surprise. They seldom fail in capturing hundreds of prisoners, as well as cattle, horses, etc. The slaves are disposed of to the Arabs; and some are sold at towns on the banks of the Niger, and eventually reach the seaside, where they are shipped on board Spanish slavers. The Felatah army of Rabbah is commanded by several Bornouese.

The finest horses are brought from Soccatoo by the Arabs; they are all entire, and capable of enduring great fatigue. The white horse, the property of the King, which was eating grass at one side of the apartment in which we held our first audience, was a noble animal, about sixteen hands high, and in England would be worth about a hundred and fifty guineas.

The horses between Rabbah and Iddah [Idah], the latter being the first town where many are met with, are of a much smaller breed, and very sure-footed. . . . The saddles used are peaked before and behind, in the Turkish fashion, and stuffed with cotton, covered with dyed leather made from sheepskin. . . .

Rabbah carries on an extensive traffic, and from its favourable position, in the centre of a populous country—Soccatoo, Kano, and the Houssa country on the east side, and the Yarriba on the west—might be made a place of considerable trade. The Arabs carry on an extensive traffic in horses, asses, raw silk, red caps from Tripoli, armlets, anklets, and trona (*carbonis soda impura*) [natron], which is used as a substitute for salt, as a medicine by the natives, and is given to the cattle. . . . Kafilas of merchants, Arabs from Tripoli, Soccatoo, Kano, and the Houssa country, were at Rabbah during our stay. Several of the Arabs were acquainted with the English consul at Tripoli, and they stated the journey to that place took nine months. . . .

The Felatah ladies are very particular in adorning and ornamenting their persons: their toilet occupies them several hours, and preparations for it are commenced the night before, by

laying the leaves of henna, moistened, to the toes and fingernails, and hands; on the following morning the leaves are removed, the parts being stained a beautiful purple colour. They have an extraordinary practice of staining the teeth with the acid of the Goora nut and indigo. . . . The four front teeth of the upper and lower jaw are dyed, one of a blue, the next its natural colour—white; the next purple, and the next yellow. The eyelids then take up great attention: they are pencilled with the sulphuret of antimony, which, contrasted with their ebony countenances, and the conjunctiva, or white of the eye, gives them an expressive appearance. Their hair . . . is another important part: seven or eight attendants are employed moistening the indigo for it. The hair is plaited in perpendicular knots of four or five inches long, and then bedaubed all over with the moistened indigo, after which the hair resembles a helmet in appearance. Several mornings in the week they besmear themselves all over, from head to foot, with a red pigment prepared from redwood brought from the Eboe [Ibo] country. It is supposed to possess a tonic quality, and also to lighten the colour of the skin and correct the fetor of perspiration. . . .

SCHÖN AND CROWTHER · *Iboland and the Slave-Trade*¹

I cannot see why the place should bear the name ‘Little Ibo’, since the people do not belong to the Ibo Nation at all, and still speak the Brass Language. Only one of those who came on board was a real Ibo, employed, in the service of Obi, at this place. Simon Jonas, our Ibo Interpreter, and myself, had some conversation with him: from which we gathered, that there was not much traffic in slaves at present, and the people were chiefly engaged in preparing palm-oil. He expressed no small

¹ From J. F. Schön and S. A. Crowther, *Journals*, London, 1842, pp. 41–48. James Frederick Schön, a German, trained at the Basel Missionary Seminary; worked with the C.M.S. from 1834 as a missionary and linguist, making a special study of Hausa and Ibo. Samuel Adjai Crowther (c. 1809–91), a Yoruba, born at Oshogun; rescued from a Portuguese slave-ship in 1822, and taken to Freetown; student, and later tutor, at Fourah Bay College; ordained in 1843; spent the remainder of his life in missionary work for the C.M.S.; consecrated Bishop of ‘Western Equatorial Africa beyond the Queen’s Dominions’ in 1864. Both Schön and Crowther took part in the 1841 Niger expedition (see below, p. 245).

degree of surprise when he was told by the Interpreter that he himself had been made a slave, but had been liberated and kindly treated by the English. The Ibo man could scarcely credit it. He had hitherto believed that slaves were purchased by the White people to be killed and eaten, and that their blood was used to make red cloth. This notion is very prevalent among them. . . .

On the right bank of the main river there is a town named Anya—signifying ‘eye’ in the Ibo language—from which the inhabitants flocked to us, in large numbers, in their canoes. All of them spoke Ibo, and are subject to Obi. . . . Their palm-oil, as well as their slaves, are said to be taken down the Benin branch, to a place called Egabo; most probably a town of the Brass country: and there is nothing absurd in the supposition that, from thence they may find their way, or be conveyed to Lagos, or Whydda. There can be no doubt that there is much traffic in slaves carried on in this region. We had such proofs of it as cannot be contradicted: several little boys, of about nine or ten years of age, were even brought to our vessels and offered for sale: they were of the Yaruba nation. On reasoning with the man, in whose charge they were, on the sinfulness of his conduct, he readily admitted that the slave-trade was a bad thing, but maintained that it was an evil which could not be remedied, and which, according to his opinion, will never be given up. . . .

Never has the slave-trade appeared so abominable to me as today, when I found that the Natives, in general, entertain the most fearful ideas of the miseries to which they expose the helpless victims of their avarice, by selling them. The circumstance by which this information was obtained, or rather confirmed—I having often heard it before—is too interesting to be omitted. Our Brass Interpreter was peculiarly anxious that one of the large number of persons who surrounded our vessel this evening should come on board, because he thought he recognised him. Though many years had elapsed since our Interpreter was sold; and the other had, in the meantime, become an old man, they instantly recognised each other; and I cannot describe the astonishment manifested by the Ibo man at seeing one whom he verily believed had long since been killed and eaten by the White people. His expressions of surprise were strong, but very significant. ‘If God Himself’ he said ‘had told me this, I could

not have believed what my eyes now see.' The Interpreter then found out that Anya was the very place to which he had first been sold as a slave, and at which he had spent nine years of his early life; and that the very person to whom he was speaking had been his doctor and nurse in a severe illness, on which account he had retained a thankful remembrance of him. . . . King Obi sent one of his sons to welcome the strangers: he was a very fine-looking young man, of about twenty years of age. Both himself and his companions attended our morning devotions. . . . When I told one, this morning, that the slave-trade was a bad thing, and that White people worked to put an end to it altogether, he gave me an excellent answer. 'Well, if White people give up buying, Black people will give up selling slaves.' He assured me too that it had hitherto been his belief that it was the will of God that Black people should be slaves to White people.

ALLEN AND THOMPSON · *Negotiations with King Obi*¹

. . . The pertinent remarks of this untutored native Chief will thus also shew the reader more clearly, how fully he understood the nature of the treaties we were proposing for his acceptance.

Commissioners.—Does Obi sell slaves for his own dominions?

Obi.—No; they come from countries far away.

Commissioners.—Does Obi make war to procure slaves?

Obi.—When other chiefs quarrel with me and make war, I take all I can as slaves.

Commissioners.—What articles of trade are best suited to your people, or what would you like to be brought to your country?

Obi.—Cowries, cloth, muskets, powder, handkerchiefs, coral

¹ Captain William Allen and T. R. H. Thompson, *Narrative of the Expedition to the River Niger in 1841*, London, 1848, i, pp. 218–27. William Allen (1793–1864) served in the navy from the age of twelve, eventually reaching the rank of rear-admiral. He took part in the 1832 Niger expedition and commanded this 1841 expedition, which Dr. T. R. H. Thompson accompanied as surgeon. On his return he was placed on half-pay, and devoted himself to Middle Eastern travel, literature, music, and painting. (In 1840 he published *Picturesque Views on the River Niger in 1832–3*, one of which is reproduced as Plate 10.)

beads, hats—anything from the white man's country will please. . . .

Commissioners.—Englishmen will bring everything to trade but rum or spirits, which are injurious. If you induce your subjects to cultivate the ground, you will all become rich; but if you sell slaves, the land will not be cultivated, and you will become poorer by the traffic. If you do all these things which we advise you for your own benefit, our Queen will grant you, for your own profit and revenue, one out of every twenty articles sold by British subjects in the Aboh territory; so that the more you persuade your people to exchange native produce for British goods, the richer you will become. You will then have a regular profit, enforced by treaty, instead of trusting to a 'dash' or present, which depends on the willingness of the traders.

Obi.—I will agree to discontinue the slave-trade, but I expect the English to bring goods for traffic.

Commissioners.—The Queen's subjects cannot come here to trade, unless they are certain of a proper supply of your produce.

Obi.—I have plenty of palm-oil.

Commissioners.—Mr. Schön, a missionary, will explain to you in the Ibu language what the Queen wishes; and if you do not understand, it shall be repeated.

Mr. Schön began to read the address drawn up for the purpose of shewing the different tribes what the views of the Expedition were; but Obi soon appeared to be tired of a palaver which lasted so much longer than those to which he was accustomed. He manifested some impatience, and at last said:—'I have made you a promise to drop this slave-trade, and do not wish to hear anything more about it.' . . .

He seemed to be highly amused on our describing the difficulties the slave-dealers have to encounter in the prosecution of the trade; and on one occasion, he laughed immoderately when told that our cruisers often captured slave-ships, with the cargo on board. We suspected, however, that much of his amusement arose from his knowing that slaves were shipped off at parts of the coast little thought of by us. The abundance of Brazilian rum in Aboh shewed that they often traded with nations who have avowedly no other object.

The interpreter, Simon Jonas, was a practical illustration of the advantages which the Commissioners wished the King to

assist in procuring for his country. He was, therefore, told to state how he came to be with us; he said:—‘I was once taken from my country and parents, and sold as a slave; but an English man-of-war captured the ship I was sent in, and, after having been well treated, and taught how to write and read at Sierra Leone, I am as free as a white man.’ . . .

Some of the presents were now brought in, which Obi looked at with evident pleasure. His anxiety to examine them completed his inattention to the remainder of the palaver.

Commissioners.—These are not all the presents that will be given to you. We wish to know if you are willing to stop boats carrying slaves through the waters of your dominions?

Obi.—Yes, very willing; except those I do not see.

Commissioners.—Also to prevent slaves being carried over your land?

Obi.—Certainly; but the English must furnish me and my people with arms, as my doing so will involve me in war with my neighbours.

Obi then retired for a short time to consult with his headmen.

Commissioners—(*on his return*).—Have you power to make an agreement with the Commissioners in the name of all your subjects?

Obi.—I am the King. What I say is law. Are there two Kings in England? There is only one here. . . .

Commissioners.—Would you like to send one of your sons to England?

Obi.—I sent two persons in the ‘Quorra’, but never saw them afterwards. How can I let my son go, if those already sent have never been heard of?

Commissioners.—That shall be inquired into. Obi must also give every facility for forwarding letters, &c., down the river, so that the English officer who receives them may give a receipt, and also a reward for sending them.

Obi.—Very good, (*snapping his fingers*).

Commissioners.—Have you any opportunity of sending to Bonny?

Obi.—I have some misunderstanding with the people intermediate between Aboh and Bonny; but I can do it through the Brass people. . . .

The Commissioners requested Mr. Schön, the respected

missionary, to state to King Obi, in a concise manner, the difference between the Christian religion and heathenism, together with some description of the settlement at Sierra Leone.

Mr. Schön.—There is but one God.

Obi.—I always understood there were two.

Mr. Schön recapitulated the Decalogue and the leading truths of the Christian faith, and then asked Obi if this was not a good religion, to which he replied, with a snap of the fingers, 'Yes, very good,' (makka). . . .

Commissioners.—Will the King make a law that no human sacrifices shall be made, no murders committed, and that the treaty be properly observed?

Obi.—Where I have power, the law shall be put into execution. . . .

Commissioners.—If the Queen makes a treaty with Obi, will his successors, on his death, abide by the same?

Obi.—They will do as I command. I want this palaver to be settled. I am tired of so much talking, and wish to go on shore. . . .

ALLEN AND THOMPSON · *Kingship in Idah*¹

A small present, sent by the Commissioners, was then shewn the Attah; on which he asked through his 'mouth', or prime minister, 'if they had said all, and if they had done;' and being informed they had for the present; the Attah, through his 'mouth', replied:

'I am glad, and I first thank God to see you near me. If your countrymen are glad to see me, they must believe what I say. The late King wished white men to come to his dominions, but he did not care to see them. I am now the Attah, or King, and white people have come to visit me, and it gives me great pleasure. If they intend to be true friends, they must not be in a hurry; for I like my friends to eat and drink with me several

¹ From William Allen and T. R. H. Thompson, *Narrative of the Expedition to the River Niger in 1841*, i, pp. 287–9 and 325–7. The *Ata* was King of the Igala state, with its capital at Idah, at this time an important commercial centre on the Niger, with historic connexions southwards with Benin and northwards with Nupe. On the history and political system of Igala, see R. G. Armstrong, *Peoples of the Niger-Benue Confluence*, pp. 80–87.

days. If a stranger comes to me, I cannot let him depart without a fair and proper understanding. I did not like to come out in the rain; but the white men were resolved to see me, and I imagined from that, they could stop it; *but it rains as much as ever*. The river belongs to me, a long way up and down, on both sides, and I am King. The Queen of white men has sent a friend to see me. I have also just now seen a present, which is not worthy to be offered to me—it is only fit for a servant. God made me after His image; I am all the same as God; and He appointed me a King. Can I send a messenger to the Queen of the Whites?"

Dr. McWilliam said, 'Most certainly; the Queen will be delighted to hear from the Attah of Iddah, and to establish a lawful trade with him.'

The Attah, through his 'mouth'—'You ask me to go on board of a ship. A King in this country *never* goes on board ship. He never puts foot in a canoe. When white people were here before, the King never went on board. If any one desires to see *me*, he must come to *me*. If to speak privately, I will dismiss my people. If it be a public matter, then I shall allow them to remain; but the King *never* goes on board ship.' . . .

The Attah was very much amused at Mr. Schön's spectacles, and even smiled, which obliged the fanbearers to hide the royal countenance for a short time; as it is contrary to etiquette to let strangers or common people witness an emotion so entirely beneath the dignity of an Iddah sovereign. When he eats or drinks, the persons in attendance all turn their backs to him, that he may not be seen doing what is inconsistent with their notions of royalty. . . .

The Government of the Eggarah [Igala] country is monarchical, and vested in the Attah or King of Iddah; the succession is hereditary in the female line, the eldest son of the sister; thus, it is said, Ochejih, the present Attah, succeeded, taking precedence of the many children of the former King. Under certain circumstances, which we could not ascertain, the sovereign has the right of nominating a successor. The above mode of succession, through a sister's son, is exactly the same as obtains among the Ashantis, and is one of the many strange coincidences observable in the social policy of some others of the West African tribes.

The Attah's power is said to be arbitrary, but still kept within bounds by the influence of the headmen, and by the dread of being quietly removed by secret poison.

All important subjects are discussed in an assembly of the judges, Mallams and headmen, the Attah presiding. Minor disputes or offences are settled or punished by the judges, of whom there are several. Lobo, the Ogboēh or first judge, and Hakah Saije, second, being also commanders of the forces in time of war. . . . They are armed with spears, and swords, as also bows with poisoned arrows, but the musket is much preferred to the latter. They have a limited number of cavalry, mounted on the small, thin, though powerful horses which are chiefly brought from above the confluence, or from the hill country to the eastward. Unlike the Ibu [Ibo] people, they pay little attention to the arming of canoes, their general employment being more on land than on water. Mazamba, a Mallam, officiates as minister of war.

The whole of the religious power is confided to the Mallams or priests, who are all unlettered Mahomedans, but who have had the advantage of travelling in other parts of Africa, where, in addition to a few sentences of the Koran, and an imperfect knowledge of the great Prophet's doctrines, they have picked up a good idea of business, which they combine with the duties of their office. . . .

SECTION EIGHT

The Nineteenth Century

1850 to 1900

BARTH · *The Social Life of Kukawa [Kūka]*¹

Two of my friends were distinguished by a good deal of Mohammedian learning, by the precision with which they recollect ed the countries they had wandered through, and by dignified manners; but they differed much in character, and were inclined to quarrel with each other as often as they happened to meet in my house.

These two men, to whom I am indebted for a great deal of interesting and precise information, were the Arab Ahmed bel Mejub, of that division of the tribe of the Welad bu-Seb'a who generally live in the Wadi Sakiyet el Hamra, to the south of Morocco, and the Pullo² Ibrahim, son of the Sheikh el Mukhtar, in Kahaide on the Senegal, and cousin of the late Mohammed el Amin, the energetic prince of Futa-Toro. Ahmed had travelled over almost the whole of Western Africa, from Arguin³ on the ocean as far as Bagirmi,⁴ and had spent several years in Adamawa, of which country he first gave me an exact description, especially with regard to the direction of the rivers. He was a shrewd and very intelligent man; yet he was one of those Arabs who go round all the courts of the princes of Negroland, to whatever creed or tribe they may belong, and endeavour to obtain from them all they can by begging and by the parade of learning. I esteemed him on account of his erudition, but not in other respects.

¹ From Henry Barth, *Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa*, London, 1857, ii, pp. 283-95. For Barth see Introduction, pp. 15-16.

² Fulani. (Barth uses the plural 'Fulbe'.)

³ Island off the coast of Rio de Oro, south of Cape Blanco, where the Portuguese built a fort in 1448.

⁴ South-east of Lake Chad. See p. 207, n. i.

Quite a different person was the Pullo Ibrahim—a very proud young man, fully aware of the ascendancy, and strongly marked with the distinguishing character, of the nation to which he belonged. He had performed the pilgrimage to Mekka, crossing the whole breadth of Africa from west to east, from warm religious feeling, mixed up with a little ambition, as he knew that such an exploit would raise him highly in the esteem of his countrymen, and secure to him a high position in life. He had been two years a hostage in Nder (St. Louis),¹ and knew something about the Europeans. It had struck him that the French were not so eager in distributing bibles as the English, while he had truly remarked that the former were very sensible of the charms of the softer sex, and very frequently married the pretty daughters of the Dembasega. He obtained from me, first the Zabur, or the Psalms of David, which even the Arabs esteem very highly, and would esteem much more if they were translated into a better sort of Arabic, and afterwards the whole Bible, which he wished to take with him on his long land-journey.

The Arabs and the Fulbe, as is well known, are in almost continual warfare all along the line from the Senegal as far as Timbuktu; and it was most interesting for me to see him and Ahmed in violent altercation about the advantages of their respective nations, while I was thereby afforded an excellent means of appreciating their reports with regard to the state of the tribes and countries along the Senegal. The way in which they began to communicate to me their information was in itself expressive of their respective characters, Ahmed protesting that, before he dared to communicate with me, he was compelled to ask the permission of the vizier, while Ibrahim laughed at him, declaring that he felt himself fully authorised to give me any information about Negroland. Ibrahim became an intimate friend of mine, and took a lively interest in me, particularly commiserating my lonely situation in a foreign country, far from home, without the consolations of female companionship. . . .

Besides these two men, there were many interesting strangers at that time in Kukawa, from whom I learnt more or less. Some of them I shall here mention, as their character and story

¹ The original French fort in Senegal, built in 1638.

will afford the reader a glance at one side of life in Negroland. A man who had performed travels of an immense extent, from Khorasan in the east as far as Sansandi [Sansanding]¹ in the west, and from Tripoli and Morocco in the north as far as Asianti . . . towards the south, would have been of great service, if he had preserved an exact recollection of all the routes which he had followed in his devious wanderings; . . . This enterprising man, who generally travelled as a dervish, had gone from Sofara on the Mayo balleo or Niger, between Hamdallahi² and Sego [Segu], across a most unsettled country, to Woghodogho [Wagadugu]; but he was unable to give me any precise details with regard to it, and I never met another person who had travelled this dangerous route. He had also travelled all along the pagan states to the south of Bagirmi and Waday, and advised me strongly, if it were my plan to penetrate to the upper Nile (as, indeed, I then intended, notwithstanding my total want of means), to adopt the character of a dervish, which he deemed essential for my success. But while such a character might, indeed, insure general success, it would preclude the possibility of making any accurate observations, and would render necessary the most painful, if not insupportable, privations. And on the whole this poor fellow was less fortunate than I; for in the year 1854 he was slain on that very route from Yola to Kukawa which I myself had twice passed successfully. He was a native of Baghdad, and called himself Sherif Ahmed el Baghdadi.

There was another singular personage, a native of Sennar,³ who had been a clerk in the Turkish army, but, as malicious tongues gave out, had been too fond of the cash intrusted to his care, and absconded. He afterwards resided some years in Waday, where he had drilled a handful of the sultan's slaves, had come to this kingdom to try his fortune, and was now about to be sent to Waday by the sheikh of Bornu, as a spy, to see if the prince of that country had still any design of recommencing hostilities. From all persons of this description a traveller may learn a great deal; and, intriguing fellows as they generally are,

¹ On the upper Niger, below Segu.

² Capital of Massina (meaning 'Praise be to God'), near Jenne on the upper Niger. See p. 254.

³ On the Blue Nile, in the eastern Sudan, formerly capital of the Fung kingdom.

and going from court to court spreading reports everywhere, prudence requires that he should keep on tolerably good terms with them.

Most interesting and instructive was a host of pilgrims from different parts of Masena [Massina] or Melle [Mali], partly Fulbe, partly Songhay, who having heard of the white man, and of his anxiety to collect information respecting all parts of the continent, came repeatedly to me to contribute each his share. I used to regale them with coffee, while they gave me ample opportunities of comparing and testing their statements. The most interesting and best informed amongst them were Bu-Bakr, a native of Hamdallahi, the capital of the sheikh (sekho) Ahmedu ben Ahmedu,¹ who having made a pilgrimage to Mekka, had long resided in Yeman, and was now returning homeward with a good deal of knowledge; and another cheerful and simple-hearted old man from Sa on the Isa or Niger, between Hamdallahi and Timbuktu. . . .

But I must principally dwell upon my relations to the vizier el Haj Beshir ben Ahmed Tirab, upon whose benevolent disposition the whole success of the mission depended, as he ruled entirely the mind of the sheikh,² who was more sparing of words, and less intelligent.

Mohammed el Beshir, being the son of the most influential man in Bornu after the sheikh, enjoyed all the advantages which such a position could offer for the cultivation of his mind, which was by nature of a superior cast. He had gone on a pilgrimage to Mekka in the year 1843, by way of Ben-Ghazi, when he had an opportunity both of showing the Arabs near the coast that the inhabitants of the interior of the continent are superior to the beasts, and of getting a glimpse of a higher state of civilisation than he had been able to observe in his own country.

Having thus learned to survey the world collectively from a new point of view, and with an increased eagerness after everything foreign and marvellous, he returned to his native country, where he soon had an opportunity of proving his talent, his father being slain in the unfortunate battle at Kusuri, and

¹ Shaikh Ahmadu, the Fulani reformer, who founded the theocratic state of Massina about 1810.

² i.e. Shaikh 'Umar, son and successor of Muhammad al-Kānamī, who reigned from 1835 to 1880.

Sheikh 'Omar, a fugitive in his native country, having much need of a faithful counsellor in his embarrassed situation. The sheikh was beset by a powerful and victorious host, encamping in the largest of the towns of his kingdom, while the party of the old dynasty was rising again, and not only withdrawing from him the best forces wherewith to face the enemy, but threatening his very existence, at the same time that a brother was standing in fierce rivalry to him at the head of a numerous army. Sheikh 'Omar was successful, the host of Waday was obliged to withdraw, and, abandoning the purpose for which they had come, namely that of re-establishing the old dynasty, commenced a difficult retreat of many miles at the beginning of the rainy season; the partisans of the old dynasty were entirely crushed, the last prince of that family slain, the residence of the sultans levelled to the ground, and even the remembrance of the old times was almost effaced. . . .¹

Sheikh 'Omar, therefore, could not but choose to confide rather in the intelligent son of his old minister, the faithful companion in the field and counsellor of his father, than in his own fierce and jealous brother; and all depended upon the behaviour of Haj Beshir, and upon the discretion with which he should occupy and maintain his place as first, or rather only minister of the kingdom. Assuredly his policy should have been to conciliate, as much as possible, all the greater 'kokanawa' or courtiers, in order to undermine the influence of 'Abd e' Rahman, whom it might be wise to keep at a respectful distance.² But in this respect the vizier seems to have made great mistakes, his covetousness blinding him to his principal advantages; for covetous he certainly was—first, from the love of possessing, and also in order to indulge his luxurious disposition, for he was certainly rather 'kamuma', that is to say, extremely fond of the fair sex, and had a harim of from three to four hundred female slaves.

In assembling this immense number of female companions for the entertainment of his leisure hours, he adopted a scientific principle; in fact, a credulous person might suppose that he

¹ On these events, which occurred in 1846, see Introduction, p. 44.

² For the *Kokanawa* see below, Sect. VIII, p. 290-3. 'Abd al-Rahmān, brother of Shaikh 'Umar, led a revolt against the Shaikh in 1853-4; it was eventually crushed and 'Abd al-Rahmān executed.

regarded his harim only from a scientific point of view;—as a sort of ethnological museum—which he had brought together in order to impress upon his memory the distinguishing features of each tribe. I have often observed that, in speaking with him of the different tribes of Negroland, he was at times struck with the novelty of a name, lamenting that he had not yet had a specimen of that tribe in his harim, and giving orders at once to his servants to endeavour to procure a perfect sample of the missing kind. I remember, also, that on showing to him one day an illustrated ethnological work in which he took a lively interest, and coming to a beautiful picture of a Circassian female, he told me, with an expression of undisguised satisfaction, that he had a living specimen of that kind; and when, forgetting the laws of Mohammedan etiquette, I was so indiscreet as to ask him whether she was as handsome as the picture, he answered only with a smile, at once punishing and pardoning my indiscreet question. I must also say that, notwithstanding the number and variety of the women who shared his attention, he seemed to take a hearty interest in each of them; at least I remember that he grieved most sincerely for the loss of one who died in the winter of 1851. Poor Haj Besir! He was put to death in the last month of 1853, leaving seventy-three sons alive, not counting the daughters, and the number of children which may be supposed to die in such an establishment without reaching maturity.

But to return to his political character. I said that he neglected to attach to himself the more powerful of the courtiers, with whose assistance he might have hoped to keep the rival brother of Sheikh 'Omar at some distance; indeed, he even alienated them by occasional, and sometimes injudicious use of his almost unlimited power, obliging them, for instance, to resign to him a handsome female slave or a fine horse. If he had possessed great personal courage and active powers, he might have mastered circumstances and kept his post, notwithstanding the ill-will of all around him; but he wanted those qualities, as the result shows: and yet, well aware of the danger which threatened him, he was always on his guard, having sundry loaded pistols and carbines always around him, upon and under his carpet. Shortly before I arrived, an arrow had been shot at him in the evening, while he was sitting in his courtyard.

PLATE 11



Aerial view of Kano

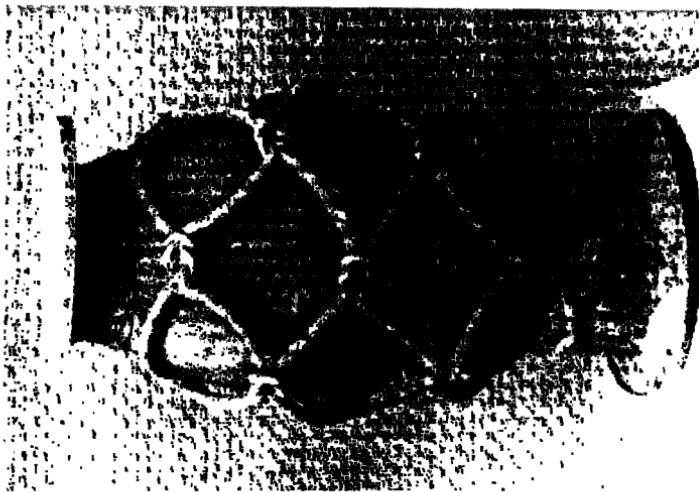
Photograph by Federal Information Service, Lagos, Nigeria

PLATE 12



(a) Cylindrical bronze pot-stand with openwork and figures, about a foot high

Both excavated in 1960 at Igbo-Ukwu, Awka District, Eastern Nigeria, by C. Thurstan Shaw, on behalf of the Nigerian Antiquities Department



(b) The Igbo vase, a pot, and pot-stand, enclosed in a rope-work pattern, all cast in bronze, thirteen inches high

Reproduced by permission of the Department of Antiquities, Jos

I have peculiar reason to thank Providence for having averted the storm which was gathering over his head during my stay in Bornu, for my intimacy with him might very easily have involved me also in the calamities which befell him. However, I repeat that altogether he was a most excellent, kind, liberal and just man, and might have done much good to the country if he had been less selfish and more active. He was incapable, indeed, of executing by himself any act of severity, such as in the unsettled state of a semi-barbarous kingdom might at times be necessary; and being conscious of his own mildness, he left all those matters to a man named Lamino,¹ to whom I gave the title of 'the shameless left hand of the vizier'....

BARTH · *Kano in Mid-Century: Foreign Trade*²

With regard to the growth of the town, we have express testimony that Dala was the most ancient quarter. The steep rocky hill, about 120 feet high, naturally afforded a secure retreat to the ancient inhabitants in case of sudden attack; but it is most probable that there was another of several separate villages within the wide expanse now encompassed by the wall, which rather exceeds than falls short of fifteen English miles, and it seems inconceivable why the other hill, 'Kogo-n-dutsi'³ (which is inclosed within the circumference of the walls), though it is not quite so well fortified by nature, should not have afforded a strong site for another hamlet. We have, indeed, no means of describing the way in which the town gradually increased to its present size; this much, however, is evident, that the inhabited quarters never filled up the immense space comprised within the walls, though it is curious to observe that there are evident traces of a more ancient wall on the south side, which . . . did not describe so wide a circumference, particularly toward the southwest, where the great projecting angle seems to have been added in later times for merely strategical purposes. The reason why the fortifications were carried to so much greater extent than the population of the town rendered necessary was

¹ Succeeded Hajj Bashir as Shaikh 'Umar's chief minister: died in 1871.

² From Henry Barth, op. cit., ii, pp. 118–33.

³ *Kwagon Dulse*, meaning 'cave'.

evidently to make the place capable of sustaining a long siege (sufficient ground being inclosed within the walls to produce the necessary supply of corn for the inhabitants), and also to receive the population of the open and unprotected villages in the neighbourhood. The inhabited quarter occupies at present only the southeastern part of the town between Mount Dala and the wall, which on this side is closely approached by the dwellings.

The wall, just as it has been described by Captain Clapperton, is still kept in the best repair, and is an imposing piece of workmanship in this quarter of the world. . . .

The quarters to the north of the great and characteristic pond Jakara, which intersects the town from east to west, are chiefly inhabited by Hausa people, or, as they are called by their conquerors, 'Habe', from the singular 'Kado',¹ while the southern quarters are chiefly, but not at all exclusively, inhabited by the Fulbe (sing. Pullo), called Fellani (sing. Bafel-lanchi) by the conquered race. . . .

In estimating the population of the town at 30,000, I am certainly not above the truth. Captain Clapperton estimated it at from 30,000 to 40,000. The population, as might be expected in a place of great commercial resort, is of a rather mixed nature; but the chief elements in it are Kanuri or Bornu people, Hausawa, Fulbe or Fellani, and Nyffawa or Nupe; a good many Arabs also reside there, who, by their commerce and their handicraft, contribute a great deal to the importance of the place. The influx of foreigners and temporary residents is occasionally very great, so that the whole number of residents during the most busy time of the year (that is to say, from January to April) may often amount to 60,000. The number of domestic slaves, of course, is very considerable; but I think it hardly equals, certainly does not exceed, that of the free men, for while the wealthy have many slaves, the poorer class, which is far more numerous, have few or none. It would be very interesting to arrive at an exact estimate of the numbers of the conquering nation, in order to see the proportion in which they stand to the conquered. As for the town itself, their whole number, of every sex and age, does not, in my opinion, exceed 4,000; but with regard to the whole country I can give no opinion.

¹ Meaning 'slave' in Fulfulde.

The principal commerce of Kano consists in native produce, namely, the cotton cloth woven and dyed here or in the neighbouring towns, in the forms of tobes or *rigona* (sing. *riga*); *turkedi*, or the oblong piece of dress of dark-blue colour worn by the women; the *zenne* or plaid, of various colours; and the *rawani baki*, or black litham.¹

The great advantage of Kano is, that commerce and manufactures go hand in hand, and that almost every family has its share in them. There is really something grand in this kind of industry, which spreads to the north as far as Murzuk, Ghat, and even Tripoli; to the west, not only to Timbuktu, but in some degree even as far as the shores of the Atlantic, the very inhabitants of Arguin² dressing in the cloth woven and dyed in Kano; to the east, all over Bornu, although there it comes in contact with the native industry of the country; and to the south it maintains a rivalry with the native industry of the Igbira and Igbo, while toward the southeast it invades the whole of 'Adamawa, and is only limited by the nakedness of the pagan *sans-culottes*, who do not wear clothing.

As for the supply sent to Timbuktu, this is a fact entirely overlooked in Europe, where people speak continually of the fine cotton cloth produced in that town, while, in truth, all the apparel of a decent character in Timbuktu is brought either from Kano or from Sansandi; and how urgently this article is there demanded is amply shown by the immense circuit which the merchandise makes to avoid the great dangers of the direct road from Kano to Timbuktu travelled by me, the merchandise of Kano being first carried up to Ghat, and even Ghadames, and thence taking its way to Timbuktu by Tawat [Tuat].

I make the lowest estimate in rating this export to Timbuktu alone at three hundred camel-loads annually, worth 60,000,000 kurdi [cowries] in Kano—an amount which entirely remains in the country, and redounds to the benefit of the whole population, both cotton and indigo being produced and prepared in the country. In taking a general view of the subject, I think myself justified in estimating the whole produce of this manufacture, as far as it is sold abroad, at the very least at about 300,000,000; and how great this national wealth is will be understood by my readers when they know that, with from

¹ The veil, or muffler, worn by the Tuareg.

² See above, p. 251, n. 3.

fifty to sixty thousand kurdi, or from four to five pounds sterling a year, a whole family may live in that country with ease, including every expense, even that of their clothing; and we must remember that the province is one of the most fertile spots on earth, and is able to produce not only the supply of corn necessary for its population, but can also export, and that it possesses, besides, the finest pasture-grounds. In fact, if we consider that this industry is not carried on here, as in Europe, in immense establishments, degrading man to the meanest condition of life, but that it gives employment and support to families without compelling them to sacrifice their domestic habits, we must presume that Kano ought to be one of the happiest countries in the world; and so it is as long as its governor, too often lazy and indolent, is able to defend its inhabitants from the cupidity of their neighbours, which, of course, is constantly stimulated by the very wealth of this country.

Besides the cloth produced and dyed in Kano and in the neighbouring villages, there is a considerable commerce carried on here with the cloth manufactured in Nyffi or Nupe, which, however, extends only to the first and the third of the articles above mentioned, viz., the 'riga', or shirt worn by men, and the 'zenne' or plaid; for the Nyffawa are unable to produce either *turkedî* or *rawani*—at least for export—while they seem, with the exception of the wealthier classes, to supply their own wants themselves. The tobes brought from Nyffi are either large black ones, or of mixed silk and cotton. . . .

The chief articles of native industry, besides cloth, which have a wide market, are principally sandals. The sandals are made with great neatness, and, like the cloth, are exported to an immense distance; but, being a cheap article (the very best, which are called 'taka-saraki', fetching only 200 kurdi), they bear, of course, no comparison in importance with the former. I estimate this branch at ten millions. It is very curious that the shoes made here by Arab shoemakers, of Sudan leather, and called 'belgh'a', are exported in great quantities to North Africa. The 'nesisa', or twisted leather strap, is a celebrated article of Kano manufacture, and 'jebiras', richly ornamented, . . . are made by Arab workmen.

The other leather-work I will not mention here, as it does not form a great article of commerce; but tanned hides ('ku-

labu') and red sheep-skins, dyed with a juice extracted from the stalks of the holcus, are not unimportant, being sent in great quantities even as far as Tripoli. I value the amount of export at about five millions.

Besides these manufactures, the chief article of African produce in the Kano market is the 'guro', or kola-nut; but while, on the one hand, it forms an important article of transit, and brings considerable profit, on the other, large sums are expended by the natives upon this luxury, which has become to them as necessary as coffee or tea to us . . . The import of this nut into Kano, comprising certainly more than five hundred ass-loads every year, the load of each, if safely brought to the market—for it is a very delicate article, and very liable to spoil—being sold for about 200,000 kurdi, will amount to an average of from eighty to one hundred millions. Of this sum, I think we shall be correct in asserting about half to be paid for by the natives of the province, while the other half will be profit.

But we must bear in mind that the greater part of the persons employed in this trade are Kanawa, and that therefore they and their families subsist upon this branch of trade.

A very important branch of the native commerce in Kano is certainly the slave-trade; but it is extremely difficult to say how many of these unfortunate creatures are exported, as a greater number are carried away by small caravans to Bornu and Nupe than on the direct road to Ghat and Fezzan. Altogether, I do not think that the number of slaves annually exported from Kano exceeds 5,000; but, of course, a considerable number are sold into domestic slavery, either to the inhabitants of the province itself or to those of the adjoining districts. The value of this trade, of which only a small percentage falls to the profit of the Kanawa, besides the tax which is levied in the market, may altogether amount to from a hundred and fifty to two hundred millions of kurdi per annum.

Another important branch of the commerce of Kano is the transit of natron from Bornu to Nupe or Nyffi, which here always passes into other hands, and in so doing leaves a considerable profit in the place. The merchandise is very cheap, but the quantity is great, and it employs a great many persons, as I shall have ample occasion to illustrate in the course of my proceedings. Twenty thousand loads, at the very least, between

pack-oxen, sumpter-horses, and asses, of natron must annually pass through the market of Kano, which, at 500 kurdi per load, merely for passage-money, would give 10,000,000 kurdi.

I here also mention the salt-trade, which is entirely an import one, the salt being almost all consumed in the province. Of the three thousand camel-loads of salt, which I have above computed as comprising the airi [caravan] with which I reached Katsena, we may suppose one third to be sold in the province of Kano, and therefore that hereby a value of from fifty to eighty millions annually is drained from the country. But we must not forget that the money which is paid for this requisite (and not only for that consumed in Kano, but also in other provinces) is entirely laid out by the sellers in buying the produce of Kano, viz., cloth and corn. Here, therefore, is an absolute balance—a real exchange of necessities and wants. . . .

BARTH · *Kano in Mid-Century: Government*¹

The authority of the governor is not absolute, even without considering the appeal which lies to his liege lord in Sokoto or Wurno, if the subjects' complaints can be made to reach so far: a sort of ministerial council is formed, to act in conjunction with the governor, which in important cases he can not well avoid consulting. At the head of this council stands the ghaladima, whose office originated . . . in the empire of Bornu, and who very often exercises, as is the case in Kano, the highest influence, surpassing that of the governor himself; then follows the 'serki-n-dawakay' (the master of the horse), an important charge in barbarous countries, where victory depends almost always on the cavalry; then the 'banda-n-Kano' (a sort of commander-in-chief); then the 'alkali', or chief justice, the 'chiroma-n-Kano' (the eldest son of the governor, or some one assuming this title), who exercises the chief power in the southern part of the province; the 'serki-n-bay' (properly, the chief of the slaves), who has the inspection of the northern districts of the province as far as Kazaure; then the 'gado', or lord of the treasury; and, finally, the 'serki-n-shano' (the master of the oxen, or rather the quartermaster-general), who has all the military stores under his care;

¹ From Henry Barth, op. cit., ii, pp. 145–7.

for the ox, or rather the bull, is the ordinary beast of burden in Negroland. It is characteristic that, when the governor is absent paying his homage to his liege lord, it is not the ghaladima, but the gado and the serki-n-shano, who are his lieutenants or substitutes.

With regard to the government in general, I think in this province, where there is so much lively intercourse, and where publicity is given very soon to every incident, it is not oppressive, though the behaviour of the ruling class is certainly haughty, and there is, no doubt, a great deal of injustice inflicted in small matters. The etiquette of the court, which is far more strict than in Sokoto, must prevent any poor man from entering the presence of the governor. The Fulbe marry the handsome daughters of the subjugated tribe, but would not condescend to give their own daughters to the men of that tribe as wives. As far as I saw, their original type has been well preserved as yet, though, by obtaining possession of wealth and comfort, their warlike character has been greatly impaired, and the Fellani-n-Kano have become notorious for their cowardice throughout the whole of Negroland.

BARTH · *Adamawa*¹

Mohammed Lowel, son of M'allem Adama, was sitting in a separate hall, built of clay, and forming, for this country, quite a noble mansion. From without especially, it has a stately castle-like appearance, while inside, the hall was rather encroached upon by quadrangular pillars two feet in diameter, which supported the roof, about sixteen feet high, and consisting of a rather heavy entablature of poles, in order to withstand the violence of the rains. The governor was very simply dressed, and had nothing remarkable in his appearance, while his face, which was half-covered by a somewhat dirty shawl, had an indifferent expression. Beside him there were none present but Mansur² and a m'allem.

Having, as the first European that had ever visited his country

¹ From Henry Barth, op. cit., ii, pp. 490–508. On Muhammad Lawal (*al-awwal*, the First) who reigned from 1848 to 1872, see A. H. M. Kirk-Greene, *Adamawa Past and Present*, Oxford, 1938, pp. 136–40.

² One of Muhammad Lawal's brothers and principal ministers.

with the distinct purpose to enter into friendly relations with him, paid my respects on behalf of my countrymen, I delivered my letter of introduction from Sheikh 'Omár,¹ who in a few but well-chosen lines introduced me to him as a learned and pious Christian, who wandered about to admire the works of the Almighty Creator, and on this occasion cherished an ardent desire to visit also Adamawa, of the wonders of which I had heard so much. Lowel read it, and evidently not quite displeased with its contents, although he took umbrage at some of the expressions, handed it silently over to the m'allem and Mansur. . . .

Mansur explained to me that they well knew that I had not come to make war upon them . . . 'but that they were vexed because I had come to them under the protection of the Bornu people, their enemies'. A letter from the sultan of Stambul, or even from my own sovereign would have recommended me much more advantageously. The sheikh had expressly designated me as one recommended and protected by the Porte, and Bu-S'ad had mentioned, with a slight disregard of the real facts, that through inadvertence only I had left both letters, as well that from the sultan of Stambul as from the English sovereign, in Kukawa. . . .

After some visitors had come and gone, I received, about ten o'clock, a formal visit from Mode 'Abd-Allahi, the foreign secretary, and my friend from Mokha, in the name of the governor. Having moistened their organs with a cup of coffee, they acquitted themselves of their message in the following terms, 'The sultan'—all those provincial governors bear the title of sultan—'had ordered them', they said, 'to beg me to accept his most respectful regards, and to inform me that he was nothing but a slave of the sultan of Sokoto, and that I was a far greater man than himself. As such a man had never before come to his country, he was afraid of his liege lord, and begged me to retrace my steps whither I had come; but if in course of time I should return with a letter from Sokoto, he would receive me with open arms, would converse with me about all our science, and about our instruments, without reserve, and would show me the whole country.'

To this message, which was certainly couched in very modest

¹ Shaikh of Bornu; see Sect. VIII, p. 254.

and insinuating terms, I answered that Mohammed Lowel, so far from being a slave of the sultan of Sokoto, was renowned far and wide as the almost independent governor of a large province; that the fame of his father Adama, as a nobly-born learned Pullo [Fulani], extended far and wide throughout Tekrur, or Negroland, and had even reached our own country; that it was absurd to argue that I was greater than himself, and that on this account he could not receive me on his own responsibility, but was obliged to refer my suit to his liege lord in Sokoto. I brought forward the examples of Katsena and Kano, especially the latter place, in which, though it was the seat of a governor dependent on the Emir el Mumenin,¹ in the same way as the governor of Adamawa, I had long resided, without any representations being made to the sovereign lord. ‘Oh! but the relations of Katsena and Kano’, said the messengers of the governor, ‘are entirely different from those of this province. These are large and busy thoroughfares for all the world, while Adamawa is a distant territory in the remotest corner of the earth, and still a fresh, unconsolidated conquest.’ There was certainly some truth in this last remark; and whatever I might say to the contrary, the question was decided, and all reasoning was in vain. . . .

Yola is the capital of an extensive province, called by foreigners generally, and by the conquering Fulbe in diplomatic language, Adamawa, but the real name of which is Fumbina. Indeed Adamawa is quite a new name given to the country . . . in honour of M’allem Adama, the father of the present governor, who succeeded in founding here a new Mohammedan empire on the ruins of several smaller pagan kingdoms, the most considerable of which was that of Kokomi. . . .

Slavery exists on an immense scale in this country; and there are many private individuals who have more than a thousand slaves. In this respect the governor of the whole province is not the most powerful man, being outstripped by the governors of Chamba and Koncha²—for this reason, that Mohammed Lowel has all his slaves settled in *rumde* [*rumāda*] or slave-villages,³ where they cultivate grain for his use or profit, while

¹ The Commander of the Faithful, i.e. the Sultan of Sokoto.

² Chamba, at the base of the Alantika mountains. Koncha, on the river Faro, about 100 miles south of Yola. ³ On *rumāda* (sing. *rinji*) see below, p. 318.

the above-mentioned officers, who obtain all their provision in corn from subjected pagan tribes, have their whole host of slaves constantly at their disposal; and I have been assured that some of the head slaves of these men have as many as a thousand slaves each under their command, with whom they undertake occasional expeditions for their masters. I have been assured also that Mohammed Lowel receives every year in tribute, besides horses and cattle, about five thousand slaves, though this seems a large number.

The country of Fumbina is about two hundred miles long in its greatest extent, running from south-west to north-east, while its shortest diameter scarcely ever exceeds seventy or eighty miles; but this territory is as yet far from being entirely subjected to the Mohammedan conquerors, who in general are only in possession of detached settlements, while the intermediate country, particularly the more mountainous tracts, are still in the hands of the pagans. . . .

Of those who are bound to the governor of Adamawa in due allegiance—that is to say, who send him a certain present and assist him in his war-like expeditions, the governors of Chamba and Koncha take the first rank. The present governor of Chamba, Amba (properly Mohammed) Sambo, who is now a very old man, has made himself extremely famous by his daring and distant expeditions, and more especially that to the Ibo country and to Mbafu, which he undertook three years ago, and through which he has succeeded in extending not only the influence, but even the dominion of the conquerors, in a certain degree, as far as the Bight of Benin. I have some reason to suspect that it was partly owing to this expedition, which brought the Fulbe into contact with tribes on the coast, who, on account of their dress, furniture, and many of their customs, were regarded by them as Christians, that Mohammed Lowel looked upon my presence with distrust; for there were still some hundreds of those so-called Christian tribes scattered over Adamawa. . . .

HASSAN AND SHUAIBU · *Abuja: Abu Kwaka the Tall and the First Europeans*¹

His praise is sung:—

‘Dogo, the Friend of Malams and the Friend of Travellers,
Tall as the Thunder and the High Hills and the Forests.’

Abu Kwaka the Tall² succeeded his brother Abu Ja on the night of Monday, the fourth day of the month of Shawal, in the year 1851. He was called Dogon Sarki by reason of his great height, for he was six and a half feet tall, but not heavily built; his skin was dark. He was a man who encouraged the teaching of religion, and he wished to make an end of devil dancing³ in the town; moreover he allowed strangers and traders again to enter Abuja. He sent his messenger to Audu, the Emir of Zaria, and he sent Audu Ayango to Masaba,⁴ Sarkin Nufe, the Emir of Bida, to tell them that the road was open to their people and their trade; so in his time Abuja grew and flourished. . . .

In his reign donkeys, camels, and ostriches were first seen in Abuja, and tamed hyenas which performed in the market. Now, too, that traders came freely into the town there was much fine merchandise to be seen, and strange clothes from the Nufe country; and many weavers of cloth settled here. . . .

It is said that the first white men to come to Abuja came in the reign of Abu Kwaka the Tall. It was a Doctor Baikie⁵ who came with six others from Lokoja, and they camped at the foot of a cotton tree across the river Iku. They sent word to the Emir who sent back his greeting, and they were much pleased; but at this time white men were not known and it was thought that

¹ From Mallams Hassan and Shuaibu, *A Chronicle of Abuja*, translated from the Hausa and arranged by F. L. Heath, Ibadan, 1952, pp. 16 and 28. The Kingdom of Abuja (south-west of Zaria) was founded by the old Habe (Hausa) ruling dynasty of Zazzau, after it had been expelled from Zaria by the Fulani in the course of their *jihād*, preserving, in essentials, the political institutions of pre-Fulani Zazzau, of which it claimed to be still the legitimate government.

² Abu Kwaka the Tall, sixty-third Sarkin Zazzau and second King of Abuja, reigning from 1851 to 1877.

³ i.e. *bori* dancing, on which see *A Chronicle of Abuja*, pp. 61–64, and below, p. 320.

⁴ On Masaba, King of Nupe, see below, Sect. VIII, pp. 293–5.

⁵ On Doctor Baikie, see below, Sect. VIII, p. 270.

they were Arabs. Then they told the Emir that they wished to build a trading shed and trade with the people, so the Emir sent the Town Crier to cry to the people that they should take anything they had to sell to the white men as well as food. The people took chickens and eggs, ducks, bananas and other food to them, and the white men paid for all the goods that were brought to them with pieces of fine cloth; but after they had stayed for two days they left and went to Zaria.

CROWTHER · *Igbebe: A Centre of Communications*¹

The ship was full of people trading with all kinds of articles: ivory, country cloths, tobes, mats, shea butter, palm oil, yams, sheep, goats, fowls, etc. Anything in demand, either for curiosity or for use, was readily brought for sale, for cowries, or in exchange for European articles. The scene showed the disposition of the people to trade, and that a trading establishment at the Confluence would prove beneficial to the country in general. The languages spoken here are Igala,² Igbira,² Nupe, Kakanda,³ Hausa, and Yoruba. The Yorubas find their way to the Confluence by way of Lade or Rabba, from Ilorin. People speaking Doma² and Jukun, the language of Kororofa, also visit the market at Igbebe at the Confluence, and the Ibo traders come up as far as this from the Delta. . . .

One of the sailors was the bearer of a symbolical letter to a Nupe relative in Sierra Leone. This letter consisted of a red parrot tail tied to a white cotton thread at one end, with a small piece of hard wood, burnt black at one extremity, fastened to the other end of the thread; four cowries being attached to the middle of the thread, two facing each other, with the small ends upward, and the other two in like manner with the small ends

¹ From Samuel Crowther, *Journal of an Expedition up the Niger and Tshadda Rivers . . . in 1854*, London, 1855, pp. 167–70. For Crowther, see p. 243. He accompanied Baikie on the third Niger expedition (see below, p. 270), of which the *Journal* is his account. Igbebe was situated at the confluence of the Niger and Benue rivers, near modern Lokoja.

² For the Igala, Igbira, and Idoma peoples—present-day location, institutions, and traditions of origin—see Daryll Forde, Paula Brown, and R. G. Armstrong, *Peoples of the Niger-Benue Confluence*, Ethnographic Survey, Western Africa, X, London, 1955.

³ The Kakanda—a people of non-Nupe stock, though living among, and having undergone cultural assimilation to, the Nupe. See Daryll Forde, op. cit., p. 20.

downwards. This may be interpreted as follows:—the piece of hard wood burnt at one end may mean—we are well and strong, but have been mourning for your loss, and our hearts are as black as coal fire. The parrot tail may mean—we are all in good circumstances, and are expecting your return as soon as possible with the speed of a parrot. The pair of cowries with the small ends upward, facing each other, may mean—we wish to see you face to face. The inverted cowries may allude to the disorderly state of the country, as if all things have been upside down. These facts prove the willingness of the people for the return of their people, and their desire to enter into trade with the English. . . .

C R O W T H E R · *The Fall of Panda*¹

After breakfast we paid a visit to the king [Ogara, the brother of the late unfortunate King of Panda, who is now elected in his room, and is at present residing at Yimmaha], and entered more circumstantially into the affair of the destruction of Panda, and the state of things between him and the Filanis at present. He confirmed the statement that Panda was destroyed by treachery, and said that Oyigu, the King, had entertained them as strangers or traders who had come to his country, but when a sufficient force had got into the town, in the morning they commenced catching the people and plundering the houses. Three of the elders who had been caught, but have since been ransomed, and who were sitting by Ogara, were pointed out to us. Madaki, an elder war chief, who owned some horses, was dreadfully wounded in several places, in the act of defending them, and three large gashes now on his hand and back must have been severe. Oyigu, the chief, was killed, and the inhabitants taken prisoners before they were aware that any hostility was intended against them; hence, all the dependent towns and villages were deserted, and the people fled for refuge to the island in the Tshadda [Benue] and to the other side of the river. Ama

¹ From Samuel Crowther, *Journal of an Expedition up the Niger and Tshadda Rivers . . . in 1854*, pp. 156–8. Panda, or Funda, was the capital of one of the two Igbira kingdoms (the other was Koton-Karifi), both of which were tributary to the *Ata* of Idah. Panda was increasingly exposed to Fulani raids, and eventually destroyed by the Fulani in 1853, nine months before the interview recorded here.

Dogo, the Filani war chief, offered the condition of paying one hundred slaves as annual tribute; and the King said he feigned compliance with these terms, till he had recovered as many of his people from them as they were able to ransom; and that he would never go to Panda again, but when the dry season comes will remove to the other side of the river, and only inhabit Yimmaha in the rainy season, when it is difficult for the Filanis to get at them. He said, if they complied and paid one hundred slaves one year, in the next they would require two hundred, and where were they to get them?—and that they detested war, trade being their chief employment. . . .

BAIKIE · *The Aro-Chuku Oracle*¹

To the northward and eastward of Ndoki is a large district named Abanyim, where the I'gbos and people from Old Kalabar meet for trade. Not far from this stands the noted city of A'ro or A'no, where is the celebrated shrine of Tshuku, or the deity to which pilgrimages are made, not only from all parts of I'gbo proper, but from Old Kalabar, from the tribes along the coast, and from Oru, and Nimbe or Brass. The city is described as being nearly three times the size of Abo, and as extremely populous. The inhabitants are skilful artisans, and manufacture swords, spears, and metallic ornaments, specimens of all of which I have seen, and can therefore testify to their being very neatly finished. The town is always mentioned with great respect, almost, at times, with a degree of veneration, and the people say 'Tshuku ab yama', or 'God lives there'. The dialect of A'ro is peculiar, but Isuama and E'lugu are also much spoken, as well as E'fik or Old Kalabar, and numerous other languages are to be heard among the crowds of pilgrim-votaries who throng the shrine. The mark used in A'ro consists

¹ From W. B. Baikie, *Narrative of an Exploring Voyage up the Rivers Kwo'ra and Bi'nue*, London, 1856, pp. 310–14. William Balfour Baikie (1825–64), after a medical training at Edinburgh, was in 1854 appointed surgeon and naturalist to the third Niger expedition, of which, after the death of Captain Beecroft, he became leader; the *Narrative* is his account of this journey. Baikie later established himself at Lokoja, where he acted as unofficial consul, and established an unofficial British settlement, developing friendly relations with African rulers, especially Masaba, King of Nupe (see Sect. VIII, p. 293–5). On the Aro-Chuku Oracle and the economic role of the Aros, see Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta*, pp. 37–41.

of a series of (from ten to twelve) short horizontal lines, just before the ear. . . .

The religion of I'gbo is entirely Pagan, mixed up with numerous rites and ceremonies, neither in general so frightful nor so bloody as those practised in Bini, in Dahomi, and other more western countries, but still all of a pre-eminently superstitious character. The I'gbos all believe in an Almighty being, omnipresent and omnipotent, whom they call Tshuku, whom they constantly worship, and whom they believe to communicate directly with them through his sacred shrine at A'ro. But they speak also of another and a distinct Deity, who at Abo is known as Orissa, but throughout other parts of I'gbo, as 'Tshuku-Okeke', 'God the creator, or the supreme God'. Abo people believe that after death, those who have been good on earth may either go to Orissa and abide with him, or they may, if they like, visit any country on earth; and so slaves often, when dying, say that they will go and revisit their native land; if, on the other hand, a wicked man dies, it is understood that he is driven to Okomo, or hell; derived from O'ko, fire, and mo, spirit. In Abo every man and every woman of any consequence keeps as dju-dju, or sacred, the lower jaw of a pig, or, until they can procure this, a piece of wood fashioned like one. This is preserved in their huts and produced only when worshipped, or when sacrifices are made to it, which are at certain times, at intervals of from ten days to three weeks. The particular days are determined by the dju-dju men or priests, and by them intimated to the people. They sprinkle this dju-dju with palm-wine, and touching it with a kola-nut, speak to it, and ask it to be good and propitious towards them. . . .

At Abo one large tree is held as dju-dju for the whole district; it is covered with offerings, and there is an annual festival in honour of it, when sacrifices of owls, sheep, goats and bullocks are made. When a man goes to A'ro to consult Tshuku, he is received by some of the priests outside of the town, near a small stream. Here he makes an offering, after which a fowl is killed, and, if it appears unpropitious, a quantity of a red dye, probably camwood, is spilt into the water which the priests tell the people is blood, and on this the votary is hurried off by the priests and is seen no more, it being given out that Tshuku has been displeased and has taken him. The result of this preliminary

ceremony is determined in general by the amount of the present given to the priests, and those who are reported to have been carried off by Tshuku are usually sold as slaves. Formerly they were commonly sent by canoe, by a little creek, to Old Kalabar, and disposed of there. One of my informants had met upwards of twenty such unfortunates in Cuba, and another had also fallen in with several at Sierra Leone. If, however, the omen be pronounced to be favourable, the pilgrim is permitted to draw near to the shrine, and after various rites have been gone through, the question, whatever it may be, is propounded, of course, through the priests, and by them also the reply is given. A yellow powder is given to the devotee, who rubs it round his eyes, which powder is called in I'gbo, E'do. Little wooden images are also issued, as tokens of a person having actually consulted the sacred oracle, and these are known as O'fo-Tshuku, and are afterwards kept as dju-dju. A person who has been at A'ro, after returning to his home, is reckoned dju-dju or sacred for seven days, during which period he must stay in his house, and people dread to approach him. The shrine of Tshuku is said to be situated nearly in the centre of the town, and the inhabitants of A'ro are often styled O'mo-Tshuku, or God's children.

BOWEN · *The Battle of Abeokuta*¹

. . . In the latter part of February, 1851, it was no longer a question whether the king of Dahomy would attack Abbeokuta. His army, the largest perhaps that he had ever commanded, was advancing through the Iketu kingdom, molesting no one, intent on the single object of the expedition. The Egbas were actively engaged in making preparations for the contest. Patrols were constantly on duty in every part of the town and surround-

¹ From T. J. Bowen, *Adventures and Missionary Labors in Several Countries in the Interior of Africa, from 1849 to 1856*, Charleston, 1857, pp. 119–22. Bowen (died 1875) was an American Baptist, ‘the first outstanding missionary of the Southern Baptist Convention’, who spent six years in Nigeria. On his return to America he tried unsuccessfully to persuade the U.S. Government to support his project for an American Negro colony, on Liberian lines, in the region of Lagos and Abeokuta. In later life he became insane. (J. F. A. Ajayi, *Christian Missions and the Making of Nigeria, 1841–1891*, ch. ii). On the background of this battle, and Ogubonna, the Balogun of Ijija, see S. O. Biobaku, *The Egba and their Neighbours*, ch. iv.

ing country. Several times we had false alarms at night, when the women made the air ring with the shrill cry of 'Ele! Ele!'—to arms! to arms! Christians prayed and heathens made sacrifices. For my own part I felt intensely interested in the result of the conflict. If the Egbas should be defeated, they had no place of refuge; for the Ijebus on the east and the Yorubas on the north were all unfriendly. Besides, the fall of Abbeokuta would totally blight the present prospect of missions to Central Africa.

Early in the morning of the 3rd of March, the scouts brought news that the army was approaching the city. I exhorted the people to stand firm, to reserve their fire, and take good aim. Ogunbonna, one of the baloguns, replied, 'You will see that we shall fight.' Toward noon, the Egbas, amounting perhaps to 15,000 men, all armed with guns, marched out at the Badagry gate, to meet the enemy. There was no noise and no gasconading, after the manner of the Golahs, but I could plainly see in their firm and solemn countenances, as thousands after thousands passed by, that they were prepared for the occasion. They were separated into three parties; the first proceeding half a mile to the ford on the Badagry road, the second under Ogunbonna, crossing the river near the wall, and the third remaining not far from the gate. Soon after we saw the Dahomies advancing across the prairie in heavy squadrons, with flying colors. We heard afterwards that they numbered 10,000 men and 6,000 women. They divided into two parties, one coming forward to the ford, and the other, led by the king, proceeding over the plain to attack Ogunbonna. When sufficiently near, they made a furious charge according to their manner, and the Egbas gave way. I saw Ogunbonna's division retreating rapidly toward the river, where they would be embarrassed by the rocks and deep pools in the stream, and requested the division near the wall to run down and cover them while crossing. They obeyed with alacrity, but Ogunbonna rallied, and the battle began in earnest. By this time the party at the ford were retreating upon us with the utmost precipitation, closely pursued by the Dahomies. Many of the Egbas, who had remained about the gate, fled into the town and disappeared. I attempted in vain to stop them. 'Why don't you stand and fight', said I, to one of the fugitives. 'Hold your tongue', he replied, and went

his way. The party from the ford were pouring in at the gates, and I feared that they would not rally, but most of them took their station promptly at the wall, and others defended the gates with guns and swords, so hotly that some of the enemy were cut down in the entrance. It was soon evident that the town was safe. The guns were roaring along the wall for a mile or more, and Ogunbonna still stood firm on the prairie. I hastened to Mr. Townsend's¹ station to tell the news, and found the missionaries on a large rock surveying the battle through a telescope. On my return to the wall after dinner, I found Ogunbonna's men resting quietly on the battle field, and the troops of the king, apparently ill at ease, were drawn up at a safe distance. There was still occasional sharp skirmishing, sometimes at close quarters, about the Badagry gate, but the greater portion of the enemy were sitting half way between the gate and the river. A resolute charge of the Egbas at this juncture might have been very disastrous to the Dahomies, but it must have been really resolute, and withal well conducted, to be successful; and for these reasons it was best to let things take their course. Both parties slept on the field. During the night the king moved off and was followed by the main body of his army about day break. They were closely pursued by the Egbas, with a continual roar of musketry, till the sound died away in the distance. At Ishagga, fifteen miles distant, the Dahomies faced about, and made an obstinate stand, but were again put to flight. While this was going on, Mr. Crowther and myself rode over the battle field, which presented a sad spectacle. According to the report of two men sent out by Mr. Townsend, 1,209 of the enemy were left on the field. Their whole loss on the two days was probably 2,000 slain and several hundred prisoners. The Egbas' loss at the wall was not serious, considering the magnitude and length of the battle. This affair spoiled the terrible name of the Dahomies. Not long afterward the king made a treaty with the English for the abolition of the slave trade in his dominions, and his subsequent wars have been of little moment. . . .

¹ Henry Townsend, appointed by the C.M.S. as their first missionary in Abeokuta in 1842; established the Abeokuta mission in 1846; thereafter played a leading part in Church affairs and Abeokuta politics. (See Ajayi and Biobaku, *passim*)

C A M P B E L L · *The Father of the King*¹

At Oyo, the capital of the Yoruba nation, there is an old man, apparently in a very humble position, for no one is more condescending and courteous than he. He is, nevertheless, no less a personage than the Onesheke, or 'Father of the King', an officer of state so called. In the event of the king's demise, the privilege of choosing a successor devolves on him; hence his position is really very exalted; besides, he is the party with whom the king is bound to advise on all important affairs. It is customary for men in high positions, the king's relatives, chief Balaguns, and so forth, to construct in front of their houses certain turret-like contrivances, called by them *akabi*. The king offered Onesheke to construct akabis in front of his house, as his position and rank demanded them. 'No,' said the old man, 'Onesheke is well enough without akabis. Let not any one be able to say, from my example, that he too must have akabis: honor belongs to the king only.' He is the only man in the kingdom who is privileged to approach the king without prostrating, nevertheless he insists on doing so, explaining his conduct always by the remark that he, in his respect to the king, would ever be an example for others to copy. The king himself, determining not to be outdone, whenever Onesheke enters the palace-yard, prostrates to the old man; and it is common for those about the palace to see one of them stealthily approaching the other, in order to first assume this position of respect.

C A M P B E L L · *The Government of Abeokuta*¹

The government of Abeokuta is peculiar, combining the monarchical, the patriarchal, and no small share of the republican. Almost every free man, woman and child is a member of the Ogboni Lodge, of which there is one in every township or chiefdom. These lodges are presided over by elders of their

¹ From Robert Campbell, *A Pilgrimage to my Motherland, an Account of a Journey among the Egbas and Yorubas of Central Africa in 1859-60*, New York, 1861, pp. 56-57 and 36-38. Robert Campbell, a Jamaican by origin, employed as a teacher at the Institute for Coloured Youth in Philadelphia, described as 'a very accomplished chemist', volunteered to accompany Martin Delany on this expedition to Yorubaland (see following extract).

own election, and the elders at the decease of the chief choose his successor from his relatives, generally his brother, seldom or never from among his own sons. . . . The successor of the king is also chosen by the chiefs and elders combined, their act being subsequently ratified by the people, assembled *en masse*. It is in this that the republican element of the government of Abeokuta is recognized. There is, as already observed, a king, the Alake, or chief of Ake, which place ranks first among the numerous townships. He is a good-natured fat old gentleman, giving himself only so much concern about public affairs as to secure the good will of his rather turbulent chiefs, to whom perhaps a ruler of more active temperament would be less welcome; there are times, however, when he has been roused to great energy and decision of character. Next in order of authority is the Ibashorun or Prime Minister, who is also in times of war commander-in-chief. He too is a man of rather cumbersome proportions, powerful on account of his wealth and the number of soldiers his household furnishes in time of war, still, not personally celebrated for military prowess. The chief next in order is Shukenu, perhaps more corpulent than the Ibashorun. Wealthy, powerful, haughty and courageous, he is nevertheless not free from the charge of cruelty. Scarcely a chief in Africa afforded us a more hearty welcome. Ogubonna, or as the English, to whom he is well known, style him, 'His Highness Ogubonna', comes next. He calls himself, not inappropriately, the Friend of Civilization; he is a man of large stature, fine proportion, and in all as fine-looking a Negro as I ever saw. No one could mistake him for any other than a chief, so commanding and dignified is his bearing. On the occasion of my first visit to his Highness, as usual he was informed of my African origin. 'From what part of Africa,' asked he, 'did your grandmother come?' As this was a point on which I possessed no information, I could not give him a satisfactory answer. He remained silent for a short time, and at last said: 'How can I tell but that you are of my own kindred, for many of my ancestors were taken and sold away.' From that day he called me relative, and of course, as every other African had as good a claim to kindredship, I soon found myself generally greeted as such.

DE LAN Y · *Madam Tinubu*¹

On our return from the interior, having made the acquaintance of, and had several interviews with, and visits to and from, the Princess Tinubu, being called upon by her, I informed her that during our tour I learned she had supplied the chief of Ijaye with the means and implements for carrying on the war, which that chief was then waging against Oyo and Ibadan. . . . She has attached to her immediate household about sixty persons, and keeps constantly employed about three hundred and sixty persons bringing her in palm oil and ivory. She had come with a private retinue of six or seven persons, her secretary, a man and several maid-servants, to counsel and give me a written statement of what she desired me to do. Having conversed for some time, after receiving my admonition concerning the part which I had learned she had taken with Arie of Ijaye, she sat some time after, positively negativing the accusation, when, bidding me farewell, and saying she would '*send* me a letter', retired. In the course of the afternoon her secretary 'Charles B. Jones', a native, came to the house, and, presenting his mistress's compliments with her final adieu, handed me a written paper, from which I take the following extracts, simply to show the general good feeling and frankness of these people, as well as the hopes and confidence they have in our going there:—

Abbeokuta, April 3rd, 1860.

Dr. Martin R. Delany:

Sir—This is to certify you, that it is with a willing mind I come to you for help; and I trust you will do according to your promise. . . . I return you my sincere gratitude for your kind information gave me while at your house, and can assure you

¹ From M. R. Delany, *Official Report of the Niger Valley Exploring Party*, Leeds, 1861, p. 36. Martin R. Delany (1812-85), of Golah origin, born at Charles Town (Va.); a medical practitioner; played a leading part in organizing the National Emigration Convention of Coloured Men at Cleveland in 1854, which appointed him as Commissioner to explore Africa. He later served as the first Negro major in the U.S. Army. In the course of his visit to Abeokuta in 1860 he made an agreement with the Egba authorities—later repudiated—for the settlement there of a North American Negro colony. Madam Tinubu, niece of Akitoye, King of Lagos, was a leading 'middleman' in the interior trade at Lagos—remembered especially for the part she played in the defence of Abeokuta against Dahomey (see Biobaku, *The Egba and their Neighbours*).

that all what you heard is false respecting my sending guns and powder to Arie, the Chief of Ijaye. . . . I beg to say, you must not forget to find the Clerk who will stop at Lagos to ship my cargo, . . . and make agreement with him before you send him here. . . . I need not say much more about the affairs, as you yourself have known my statements. With hopes that you are well, I am, dear Sir,

Your humble servant,
TINUBA.

P.S. You must not forget to send the two gauge-rods, I beg you. . . .

Yours, &c.—TINUBA.

Per Charles B. Jones.

BURTON · *The Egba State*¹

The Egbas, it must be remembered, are a race of bushmen and farmers, clothiers and blacksmiths, compelled by their enemies to collect and centralise. They were naturally unwilling to elect a king till necessity drove, and then they did it with all manner of limitations. The Alake, I have said, possesses neither the state nor the power of the pettiest Indian Rajah. The only king ever known in Yoruba was he of Oyo (Eyeo), the capital, who was described as living in regal state.

Negrotic Africa—not unlike her sisters Europe and Asia—has three distinctly marked forms of government. . . . The second is a kind of feudal monarchy, modified by the personal character of the king; oftentimes he is inferior in weight to his councillors and officers, and even a slave may refuse to obey him. . . .

To the second of this category belongs the government of Abeokuta, a weak constitutional monarchy, blighted by the checks and limits which were intended to prevent its luxuriance. The king commands in his own town, but nowhere else, like the

¹ From Sir Richard Burton, *Abeokuta and the Cameroons Mountains*, i, pp. 275–8. Sir Richard Burton (1821–90) served in the Indian Army and the Consular Service, holding the appointment of Consul for the Bights of Benin and Biafra from 1861 to 1865, in the course of which he took part in the mission to the Alake of Abeokuta described in this work. For other aspects of the life of this remarkable traveller, author, and man, see the biography by Seton Dearden, *The Arabian Knight*, London, 1936.

magistrate of a Swiss canton—to which, indeed, the state of Abeokuta may be fitly compared—and his orders hardly extend within gunshot. His is a monarchy engrafted upon the old barbarous patriarchal rule. The chiefs and councillors, more formidable than the barons in King John's day, are bound, though they often refuse, to render suit and service to their suzerain. Ancient tradition is their statute law, which, amongst civilised people, sanctions the most arbitrary injustice and which breeds a hundred tyrants instead of one. Their king is also fettered by the laws of the land, of which the Ogbonis are the conservators and exponents. He and his council may act in judicial proceedings, or the case may be carried before the Ogbonis in lodge assembled, or, if generally important, it may be decided by a 'monster meeting' of the lieges. No treaty or agreement is valid, unless ratified by all those who have a voice in it. No ordinance against witch torture or human sacrifice would be respected, unless the bill pass through the House of Lords, viz., the Bale, with the chiefs, civil and military; the head fetishmen, who are the peers spiritual; the select elders, who are the law officers of the crown; and the House of Commons, or Ogboni lodges. A subject transgressing such law would put himself under the protection of a chief, and then, unless the popular voice be unanimous, he cannot be punished. 'An Englishman's house is his castle', says the European proverb. 'Every man is king in his own house', is the less moderate Yoruban saying. . . .

BURTON · *Lagos in 1861*¹

The site of the town, four miles from the entrance, is detestable; unfortunately, there is no better within many a league. It occupies the western side of an islet about three miles and a half long from north-east to south-west, by one broad from north to south. . . . The first aspect is as if a hole had been hollowed out in the original mangrove forest that skirts the waters, where bush and dense jungle, garnished with many a spreading tree, tall palms, and matted mass of fetid verdure rise in terrible profusion

¹ From Sir Richard Burton, *Wanderings in West Africa*, London, 1863, ii, pp. 212-13, 225-6, and 216-17. For Burton, see the foregoing extract.

around. The soil is sandy, and in parts there are depressions which the rains convert into black and muddy ponds; the ground, however, is somewhat higher in the interior, where the race-course lies. . . . The thin line of European buildings that occupy the best sites, fronting the water, are, first, the French *comptoir*, prettily surrounded with gardens; then a large pretentious building, white and light yellow, lately raised by M. Carrena, a Sardinian merchant—it is said to be already decaying; then the Wesleyan Mission-house; the Hamburgher's factory; the Wesleyan chapel, with about five times its fair amount of ground; the British Consulate, like that at Fernando Po, a corrugated iron coffin or plank-lined morgue, containing a dead consul once a year; the Church Mission-house, whose overgrown compound caused such pretty squabbles in days gone by, and which, between whiles, served as a church; another Sardinian factory; a tall white-washed and slated house, built by Mr. McCoskry; and at the furthest end, another establishment of Hamburghers, who at present have more than their share of the local commerce; these are the only salient points of the scene. They are interspersed with tenements of less pretensions, '*suam quisque domum spatio circumdat*', a custom derived by the Anglo-Indians from the England and the Germany of Tacitus's day; and the thin line is backed by a large native town, imperceptible from the sea, and mainly fronting the Ikoradu Lake. . . .

Lagos contains, as has been said, some 800 Moslems, though not yet 2,000, as it is reported. Though few, they have already risen to political importance; in 1851 our bravest and most active opponents were those wearing turbans. Among these are occasionally found 'white Arabs'. One had lately died at Ekpe, a village on the 'Cradoo waters', where the ex-king Kosoko¹ lives, and though a pagan, affects the faith. I was presently visited by the Shaykh Ali bin Mohammed El Mekkawi. The reverend man was fair of face, but no Meccan; he called himself a Maliki, as indeed are most Moslems in this part of El Islam, and I guessed him to be a Morocco pilgrim, travelling in the odour of sanctity. He was accompanied by the Kazi

¹ Kosoko ruled as King of Lagos from 1845 to 1852, after a successful revolt against his uncle Akitoye; was expelled and replaced by Akitoye, as a result of British intervention, in 1852.

Mohammed Ghana, a tall and sturdy Hausa negro, with his soot-black face curiously gashed and scarred: he appeared to me an honest man and good Moslem. The dignitaries were accompanied by a mob of men in loose trousers, which distinguished them from the pagan crowd; one of them, by trade a tailor, had learned to speak Portuguese in the Brazils.

Very delightful was this meeting of Moslem brethren, and we took 'sweet counsel' together, as the missionaries say. The Shaykh Ali had wandered from Tripoli southwards, knew Bornu, Sokotu, Hausa, and Adamawa—the latter only by name, and he seemed to have suffered but little from a long journey, of which he spoke favourably. He wished me to return with him, and promised me safe conduct. . . .

[On] the 5th of August [1861] . . . a flag-ship was slipped and rigged near the British consulate, and Commander Bedingfield landed with his marines. A crowd of people and some chiefs were assembled at the palaver-house. The king, when civilly asked to sign away his kingdom, consented and refused, as the negro will, in the same breath. On the next day he affixed his mark, for of course he cannot write. . . . Without awaiting, however, the ceremony of signature, possession, nine-tenths of the law, was at once entered upon. The 'Captain' read out the English proclamation, very intelligible to the natives, confirming 'the cession of Lagos and its dependencies'—a pleasantly vague frontier. Then followed a touching scene. One Union Jack was hoisted in the town, another on the beach. 'Prometheus Vinctus' saluted with twenty-one guns. The marines presented arms; three hundred fetish, or sanctified boys, as the convert people call them, sang a hymn, headed by their missionaries. It was not 'Dies irae, dies illa, etc.' And as we Englishmen must celebrate every event with a dinner—I believe that if London were to follow Lisbon's suit, Londoners would dine together amongst the ruins of 'Willis's' or the 'Tavern'—forty-four Oyibos, Europeans, and Africo-Europeans, officials and merchants, sat down to meat upon the quarter-deck of the 'Prometheus', and by their brilliant speeches and loyal toasts added, as the phrase is, *éclat* to the great event. Thus Lagos—rose.

READE · *Trading Methods in Bonny*¹

On the 26th of January we entered Bonny, the wealthiest of these rivers of corruption. Here the traders do not dare to live ashore, but inhabit the huge hulks of ancient merchantmen. A thatched roof above, with the lower deck arranged into chambers and store-rooms, convert them into floating houses; which often from houses become hospitals.

West Africa is essentially a land of oils; this is its real wealth; and the exports of ivory and gold are small in comparison. The commissions are large, in order to tempt these factors to brave a climate whose dangers they assist with their intemperance, and still more with their inanity.

The trade is active enough, but from its nature is attended with much delay. The Bonny natives go to market in the interior. The oil is brought to them little by little in calabashes. This they pour off into barrels. It is then brought on board one of the hulks, and is purchased with goods of European manufacture.

These black traders are now almost too much for the white ones in these matters of low cunning which enter so largely into commerce of a petty nature. The days have gone by when charcoaled powder and coraline could be passed off upon the simple natives with impunity. A little can still be done with false weights and measures, but the good old days are gone for ever, and the natives have learnt to turn the dirty tables upon those who could once cheat them as they chose. On the Gold Coast gold is adulterated with copper; on the Ivory Coast teeth are plugged with lead and heavy clay; here oil is so ingeniously mixed with sand that every drop must be boiled down before the factors dare send it home to their employers. None are so bitter as sharpers when they happen to be taken in, and none complain so loudly of these 'thieves and swindlers' as those who make their living by them.

The owners, who are of course men of a very different stamp, have formed an Association for the mutual preservation of all their interests, but the factors lose no opportunity of evading these laws and cheating one another when they can.

¹ From W. Winwood Reade, *Savage Africa*, London, 1863, pp. 55–58. Winwood Reade (1838–75), landowner, atheist, and radical, chiefly remembered for his book *The Martyrdom of Man* (1872), travelled widely in West Africa, from Angola to Senegal, and served as *The Times* correspondent in the Ashanti War of 1873–4.

Among the whites there is no real unity: nobody trusts his neighbour. This gives the blacks a great advantage. . . . Rivals as they are, they can at least combine with that honesty which is always the best policy. If a negro, for instance, cheats a white man, the latter puts up with it. His brother members of the Association would freely promise to refuse to deal with the negro, but he knows very well that a canoe loaded with palm-oil could not be resisted by one of them. On the other hand, if a white man flagrantly offends, the native traders unite and 'shut the trade' to him. A case of this kind happened not long ago in the Benin. They found that a certain trader used a smaller cowrie-tub than the others: they also found that while the other salt-tubs had one stave across it, to make the salt fall light and take up more space, his had two. A council was held: the trade was shut; not a canoe came near him; and he was forced to leave the river.

BAIKIE · *King William Dappa Pepple in Exile*¹

Among the residents at Clarence at that time was Peppel, ex-king of Bonny, who was living there in a somewhat anomalous condition. By various means he had become very unpopular with his subjects, which involved English traders in the river in such difficulties, that the late Mr. Consul Beecroft had to go to Bonny to endeavour to settle matters. As a precautionary measure, as threats of assassination were openly talked of, he recommended King Peppel to go over to Fernando Po, and with a little persuasion got him on board H.M.S. 'Antelope', by which vessel he was, in February, 1854, conveyed to Clarence. He had, however, been kept since, it is said in accordance with orders from England, as a kind of prisoner at large, of which he was well aware, but against which he urgently remonstrated. The very night of Mr. Beecroft's death, he tried to escape by the 'Bacchante' steamer, and he had since made another attempt. He came and paid me a visit, which I returned, and we soon became very friendly. He is a tall, intelligent-looking person, but with a rather cunning eye. He speaks English very fairly,

¹ From W. B. Baikie, *Narrative of an Exploring Voyage up the Rivers Kwo'ra and Bi'nue*, pp. 332–5. For Baikie, see Sect. VIII, p. 270. For the circumstances of King Pepple's deposition, see Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta*, ch. vii. Pepple was eventually restored by the British Government in 1861, but 'never regained his ancient sway over the Bonny people', and died in 1866 (*ibid.* pp. 162–5).

and can sustain a long conversation. His remarks were extremely shrewd and he avoided making any very strong statements. He became King of Bonny on the 9th of April, 1837, since which period his name has become well-known along the coasts of the Bight of Biafra, and his influence extended far into the I'gbo country, reaching to Abo. Of course in the accounts he gave me, he always put the best complexion to all his proceedings, a version of things which I afterwards had occasion greatly to modify. His acquaintance with the English form of government and his general fund of information much surprised me; he knew the names and offices of all the cabinet ministers and often referred to Wellington and to Napoleon. Of the latter he was a great admirer, and alluding one day to the fate of that greatest of generals and of politicians, he proceeded, *parva componere magnis*, to sketch a resemblance between his own detention in Fernando Po, and that of the French Emperor at St. Helena. 'Why', said he in his peculiar way, and pointing to a print of Buonaparte, 'why your gubberment keep me here, I no do bad like he, I be free man, I be King.' Whatever my thoughts were I could only reply, that, were he injured, doubtless before long, and as soon as government knew accurately of his case, he would be fully compensated, as the maxim of England was to dispense even-handed justice to all. He exhibited a document from the consul, stating that he had no authority for considering him as a prisoner, and he likewise showed me two letters or certificates, signed by two English trading captains, who testified that, being present when Peppel left Bonny, he did so of his own free-will and accord, and he wound up by observing that our behaviour to him would lessen our influence among the palm-oil tribes.

Peppel usually appears in European boots and trousers, with a loose shirt as an external covering; in his left hand he carries a long silver-headed stick, his right arm being useless from an attack of hemiplegia or partial paralysis, induced, it is said, by undue indulgence in strong drinks and the pleasures of a Bonny table, and too great devotion to his numerous wives and concubines. By an agreement with his people, they were to allow him while absent at the rate of £300 a year, and he said nearly two years' arrears were due by our government of the sum stipulated to be paid him by the treaty for abolishing the

slave-trade, which latter I understand he has religiously adhered to. He gave me at different times much information about Bonny. . . . He said that the first King Peppel derived his title from selling pepper to European traders, from which the article he dealt in became his own designation, one letter, as is often the case, being substituted for another.¹ The revenue derived of late by Peppel from the increased palm-oil trade must be little short of, if it does not equal, that made in the palmiest days of the slave-trade. His income from shipping dues and other sources, I have heard reckoned, on sound authority, at from £15,000 to £20,000 a year.

HORTON · *Yoruba and Ibo*²

Lagos is only an isolated and important seaport town in the kingdom of the Akus. From want of a more specific name and from the whole of the tribes being once subjected to the king of Yoruba, the Church Missionary Society has designated it the 'Yoruba Country', but as most of the tribes, such as the Egbas and Egbadoes, have objected to their being called Yorubas, and as there is no national name by which all the tribes speaking the same language but differently governed is known, I have employed the name which is given to the whole nation at Sierra Leone, and which is generally adopted in every part of the Coast—viz., the *Akus*.³ The kingdom is bounded on the north by the right or Quora branch of the River Niger, on the south by the Atlantic, on the east by Benin, Kakanda, and part of Igara [Igala], and on the west by the kingdom of Dahomey. . . .

The Akus, as a race, are amongst the most industrious, persevering, and hard-working people on the West Coast of Africa. They are, as a rule, parsimonious in the extreme, and are consequently very wealthy. They make excellent traders, are very speculative, but saving. The men are generally hardy, strong, and cunning in their dealings with one another. . . .

¹ According to Dike (op. cit., pp. 31–2) 'Pepple' was in fact an anglicized form of 'Pelekule' or 'Perekule'.

² From J. Africanus B. Horton, *West African Countries and Peoples*, London, 1868, pp. 159, 163–5, 175, 182. James Africanus Horton (1832–83) was born in Sierra Leone of Ibo parents; went from the C.M.S. Grammar School, Freetown, to Edinburgh, where he studied medicine, taking his M.D. in 1859; wrote works on tropical medicine and African self-government.

³ So called from the Yoruba greeting, which begins 'Aku' or 'Eku'.

The Akus have a strong power of combination; they obey implicitly, and put great confidence in the advice and orders of the old men, around whose banner they will rally; this is done not out of pure love of combination, as it is well known that their head-men have a secret way of making their orders obeyed, and when it forms a case of life and death this obedience is not to be wondered at. Cases are on record, or report makes cases, where very wealthy men have disobeyed these councillors; they were threatened at the time, and within a very few weeks or months they were carried to their long home. . . .

The women make excellent traders; within a very short time they would double, treble, and even quadruple a very small amount. Their diet and living are generally simple and inexpensive; they are very litigious; some of them are very good-looking, nicely shaped and formed, although marked; others are hideously tattooed. With the old Akus, as a general rule, it is difficult to know when you have offended them. They take offence quietly, and maybe an apology is made, which apparently is accepted, but the insult or offence is still harboured, and at some future day it will be satisfactorily revenged.

The educated Akus are making great advances in civilisation, especially when untrammelled by any secret influences; some of them are most liberal and patriotic, and would spend a great deal towards developing the resources of their country. In the colony of Sierra Leone they are numerous, and rising in wealth and influence, offshoots of whom are now at Lagos, who form the educated and thriving population of that infant colony. Of the Akus in general it must be admitted without a question that there are no people on the Coast who are so hard-working and so long-suffering in proportion to what they expect in return as they; they are generally passive, supine, inaccessible to curiosity, or love of pleasure, and not easily moved by political vicissitude. . . .

The Egboes [Ibo] are considered the most imitative and emulative people in the whole of Western Africa; place them where you will, or introduce them to any manners and customs, you will find that they very easily adapt themselves to them. Stout-hearted, or, to use the more common phraseology, big-hearted, they always possess a desire of superiority, and make attempts to attain it, or excel in what is praiseworthy, without

a desire of depressing others. To them we may well apply the language of Dryden—‘A noble emulation beats their breasts’. Place an Egboe man in a comfortable position, and he will never rest satisfied until he sees others occupying the same or a similar position. Of this emulative power, the Right Rev. Bishop Crowther, scarcely a year after the establishment of the Church Missionary station at Onitsha, in Isuama Egbo, thus wrote: ‘From all I could gather by observation, the Ibos are very emulative. As in other things, so it will be in book learning. Other towns will not rest satisfied until they have also learned the mystery of reading and writing, by which their neighbours might surpass them and put them in the shade’....

The Egboes cannot be driven to an act; they are most stubborn and bull-headed; but with kindness they could be made to do anything, even to deny themselves of their comforts. They would not, as a rule, allow any one to act the superior over them, nor sway their conscience, by coercion, to the performance of any act, whether good or bad, when they have not the inclination to do so; hence there is not that unity among them that is to be found among other tribes; in fact, everyone likes to be his own master. As a rule, they like to see every African prosper. Among their own tribe, be they ever so rich, they feel no ill-will toward them. A poor man or woman of that tribe, if they meet with a rising young person of the same nationality, are ready to render him the utmost service in their power. They give him gratuitous advice, and ‘embrace him as their child’; but if he is arrogant and over-bearing, they regard him with scorn and disdain wherever he is met. When half-educated, the young men are headstrong and very sensitive; they take offence at the least unmeaning phrase.

WADDELL · *Calabar: The ‘Blood Men’*¹

... I requested the king and chiefs to remain, after the meeting had dismissed, and discoursed to them about the treatment of

¹ From Hope Masterton Waddell, *Twenty-nine Years in the West Indies and Central Africa*, London, 1863, pp. 377–9 and 476–8. Hope Waddell (1805–95), Presbyterian missionary (United Secession Church); served in Jamaica, 1829–45; founded Calabar Mission, 1846; left Calabar in 1858. For the history of the ‘Order of the Blood Men’ and slave revolts in Old Calabar, see Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta*, pp. 152–9.

their slaves. 'Masters, render to your servants that which is just and equal', &c. I pointed out various great evils that prevailed, and the proper remedies for them, to which the few hearers left gave patient hearing. The necessity of written laws carefully made, to restrain and regulate the power of masters over their bondservants, often greatly abused, was stated. . . .

The importance of these and other things submitted to them was acknowledged, but they pleaded that it was work for the next generation, the young people now growing up in our schools. It was useless, they said, to think of written laws and marriage registries where so few as yet 'saby book'. They pleaded, like all slave owners everywhere, that their slaves would not value freedom even if they could get it, or as they expressed it, would not like their masters to throw them off, adding, with some plausibility, that black people had not laws like white people to regulate all these things aright. For himself, King Eyo¹ said, that he was not yet strong enough for all that work; because Calabar was not like England, where all the people have one king, and all gentlemen from every town meet yearly, to make laws for the whole country. Every little Calabar town must have its own king, and every man was king in his own house, to do as he liked with his own people.

In connection with the foregoing subject, sensible natives have owned that if the slaves chose to 'put head together', they could take the country. . . .

We have now to relate a remarkable movement among the negroes of the Qua River plantations, multitudes of whom, from causes formerly mentioned, were more or less free, and seemed resolved to continue so. In the end of 1850, and beginning of 1851, they began to band themselves together by a covenant of blood for mutual protection, and thence were known by the name of 'blood men', their objects being to resist the encroachments and oppressions of the Duke Town gentry, and to preserve themselves from being killed on all occasions according to old customs. They knew of the law to abolish human sacrifices, and knew also that it was secretly violated; and having right, and, as they believed, white people on their side, resolved to stand by each other in self defence. A number of them having come into town, were caught and chained;

¹ King of Creek Town, Old Calabar.

their fellows retaliated by plundering the farms of the gentlemen who had them under arrest, and not till the former were released did the latter restore their booty.

A temporary arrangement was at the time with some difficulty effected; but on King Archibong¹ becoming unwell, it was thrown aside, and his people from the farms, many of whom had joined the 'blood men', came into town to save his life. For that end they resolved that if he died, his native doctor should die too, and other suspected parties. It was reported that Archibong himself had joined their covenant to secure their allegiance to himself; and beside him many free and half free people of Duke Town for their own ends. This proves that their combination was not that of slaves, against masters as such, but of men for self preservation; and that their avowed objects were not regarded by the rulers as contrary to the order and peace of the country.

That was the origin of the 'blood society', which attained such strength as to rival and defy the Egbo² association. . . .

The apparition of armed bands from the bush holding the town, so alarmed the ship captains, for their property ashore, that they sent off hastily to Fernando Po, for the consul and a man-of-war. Talking of these things at King Eyo's table one of them said, 'I would like nothing better than to see the heads of a hundred of these fellows cut off.' To that humane sentiment another old trader added, 'They ought to be shot down like dogs.' All the rest of the company, but one, echoed these opinions. 'Before they have committed any crime?' I asked; 'while perfectly peaceable and seeking only lawful objects? They claim only what our Society was formed, less than a year ago, to secure for them—that they should not be killed for nothing, nor flogged without cause.' A storm of condemnation on all sides was the only answer to my remarks, and the proposal of a conference with the heads of the party, and a reasonable attention to their complaints, was pronounced impracticable and absurd.

They soon found that they need not have been so frightened. The 'bushmen' were called in by Archibong and went away at his bidding, having done no harm; and those who wanted to

¹ King of Old Calabar.

² For Egbo (*Ekpa*), see Sect. VI, p. 183, n. 2, and Sect. VIII, p. 301.

shoot them, and behead them off-hand, were ashamed of their panic when the consul and man-of-war came, and had nothing to do. Beecroft, however, sent for the plantation head men and leaders, heard their complaints in the presence of the town rulers, and arranged a treaty of peace between them, in six or seven articles, which both parties signed. Egbo laws were declared to be binding, and that for the abolition of human sacrifices was confirmed. The farm slaves were forbidden to invade Duke Town armed, combinations for unlawful purposes prohibited, and runaways to be delivered up on demand. The missionaries, it must be added, had nothing to do with this arrangement, whatever was its value.

Though King Eyo kept silence during the discussion at his table, he was not insensible to the danger that might result from a spirit of combination among the slaves; and he sought to prevent its spreading by the old method of denunciation and terror. Heading a procession of the chiefs, preceded by the mace of authority, and attended by a band of drummers and singers, he proclaimed in the old market place, on the Calabar Sunday, that the slaves were forbidden to join any party in a covenant of blood, for any purpose, under the penalty of 'Egbo palaver', which would be death; and that free men also were forbidden to join the 'blood people', under the same penalty; but with this proviso, that they might save their heads by giving up their best men. . . .

N A C H T I G A L · *Bornu in 1870: The Council of State*¹

During the first month of my stay in Kuka I frequently had occasion to observe the Shehu² surrounded by his court; it was with this end in view that I attended meetings of the Council of State—the Nōkena—which were held daily in the mornings at the palace. This body is composed of members of the royal family, the brothers and sons of the Shehu, together with the

¹ From Gustav Nachtigal, *Sahara und Sudan*, Berlin, 1879, i, pp. 708–24. Dr. Nachtigal (1834–1885) carried out his major journey from Tripoli through the Fezzan, Bornu, Chad, Wadai, and Darfur, to the Nile, during the years 1869–73. In 1884, as Imperial German Consul and Commissioner for the West Coast of Africa, he established German rule in Duala, the first step in the occupation of Kamerun. See H. R. Rudin, *The Germans in the Cameroons*, London, 1938, ch. i.

² i.e. Shaikh 'Umar: see above, Sect. VIII, pp. 254–6.

state councillors—the *Kōkenawa* (sing. *Kōkena*)—who themselves fall into two categories: the free-born representatives of different national groups, and the military commanders—*Kachellawa* (sing. *Kachella*)—who are of slave origin.

All the state councillors appear in the morning at the royal palace, leaving their shoes, turbans, and burnuses at the entrance. They squat against the walls or on the floor, scattered about the anterooms and the courts, chatting and joking, gossiping and hatching plots, until a musical clamour of drums, pipes, trumpets and horns, electrifies them, and makes them move into the reception and conference hall. This is the sign for the sovereign to leave his private apartments and enter the ante-chamber of the reception hall, . . . attended by some of his brothers and sons and ponderous eunuchs, who together pronounce his praises in short spasmodic bursts—exclaiming, for example—‘his wisdom’, ‘the lion’, ‘the conqueror’. As the sovereign takes his place on the throne all those present hasten to abase themselves—it is as gross a breach of etiquette in Bornu to remain upright in the presence of a great man as it is to be seated with us, without the great man’s permission; and they must sprinkle the dust from the floor on their heads—or at least make a show of this ritual of obeisance, since, with a floor which has been so scrupulously swept and polished, it would be difficult to scrape together the necessary quantity of earth. . . .

Each man has his appointed place, close to or far from the sovereign, according to his degree. Nearest to the throne, against the wall where it is set, right inside the great hall, his sons and brothers take their seats. . . .

Along the sides of the hall, and facing the Shehu, are the ranks of the *Kōkenawa* proper—as those dignitaries are called who, like the princes, have not merely a seat but a vote in the *Nōkena*. These are the freeborn, the *Kambe*, representatives of the main national groups in Bornu—Kanuri, Kanembu, Tibu, and Arab. . . .

The whole Council of State (*Nōkena*) is only a shadow nowadays, surviving from the aristocratic constitution of an earlier period, and has no longer any effective power. . . . Now it is only the will of the sovereign and the influence of his favourites that count. Of course the free *Kōkenawa* have the advantage of

knowing that they are of free descent, as contrasted with the slaves of the Shehu. But, since the Shehu takes no account of noble birth, a free *Kōkena* must bow to a slave who stands higher in the sovereign's favour; though among the free councillors of state there are individuals whom the Shehu esteems—for whom he has affection, either for their own or their fathers' sake. . . .

It seems clear that most of those official positions which, in Bornu as in other autocratic states, have their origin in some form of personal attendance upon the sovereign—like the posts of 'Lord Chamberlain', 'Master of the Wardrobe', etc., in European states—have always been in the hands of slaves; since these are men whom the sovereign can trust far more than he can trust his family or free members of related lineages, and on whose devotion he can rely. It has been on these grounds that responsibility for national defence has normally in the past been entrusted to slaves—so that senior military posts seem to be especially concentrated in their hands. . . . More important and standing higher in regard than most of [the traditional state functionaries] were, and still are, those who held offices in the private apartments of the sovereign, the eunuchs, . . . the Jurōma, Mistrēma, Māla, Shitima, etc. . . .

Of special importance are the slaves who control the military power of the state—the *Kachellawa*—the most important of whom sit in the *Nōkena*. While, in case of a general war, the national army is essentially based upon a *levée en masse* among the various tribes who make up the population of the state, at the same time the *Kachellawa* have forces which are always ready and mobile under their respective commands; these constitute the nucleus of the army, and are adequate for minor expeditions against the neighbouring pagan peoples.

Among the military commanders the senior in rank at this time was the distinguished *Kachella* Bilāl, a venerable old man, who had the reputation of being the bravest and most resourceful warrior in the whole country, and who had enjoyed a very high reputation for the past half-century. He was chief of one of the Kanembu tribes, the Sugurti, and Governor of a large region in south-east Bornu. . . . Next to him in importance stood *Kachella* Abdullahi Maghirmi, chief of the Kuburi Kanembu, who commanded in the south-west of the empire. He shared to some extent with *Kachella* Bilāl the power of the former

Kaigamma,¹ though the latter's honours and privileges had been transferred to *Kachella Bilāl*. Both sat in the *Nōkena*, and accompanied the royal procession, the one on the right, and the other on the left, of the sovereign. . . .²

SIMPSON · *Nupe under King Masaba*³

August 21 [1871]. Went to King in the morning, who expressed his pleasure at seeing me. That since he had had communication with white men the Queen had never sent him an Ambassador (as he termed me) before. Proposed his power to be over all the country to Iddah [Idah]. That he gave all his land to the Queen of England; that once he was weak, now he was strong, through the Queen, meaning the guns, powder, etc., brought by the merchants, and the presents which gave him respect in the eyes of his people and the neighbouring tribes; English people were safe anywhere in his Kingdom; that Lokoja especially was for the Queen; that it was on account of the Queen that he refrained from attacking the people living below Lokoja. . . .

August 24. Visited Prince Amoroo Ichaboh, the heir to the throne, in uniform at the King's request. . . . Prince very superior in manners and appearance to the King. . . .

August 25. . . . King informed me the Queen's letter had been read in the mosque this Friday morning. People well pleased and praised him on account of it. . . .

August 29. [The King said] that three caravans with ivory were coming from Adamawa, through Lafia to trade. Had

¹ For the *Kaigamma*, see Sect. V, p. 133, and Introduction, p. 22.

² Nachtigal proceeds to give actual figures for the standing army of Bornu at this time: about 3,000 troops, cavalry and infantry, commanded by the various *Kachellawa*, and about 4,000 commanded by princes, court dignitaries, and high officials—of whom Lamino, the chief minister of the day, controlled about 1,000—making a total standing army of about 7,000 men: a relatively small force as compared with the great periods of the Bornu Empire. (Urvoy, *Histoire de l'empire du Bornou*, pp. 119–20).

³ From W. H. Simpson, *Report of the Niger Expedition, 1871*, dated 21 Nov. 1871, in F.O. 84/1351. For an account of the complicated history of Masaba's two reigns—the first beginning with his successful revolt against Usman Zaki in 1841, and the second lasting, after a period of interregnum, from 1859/60 to 1873—see Nadel, *A Black Byzantium*, pp. 80–82. 'Under his rule Bida was transformed from a huge war-camp into a capital worthy of the most powerful Kingdom of Central Nigeria.'

given a camel, an ostrich, and a horse to Abuja, King of Zaria, to permit caravans to pass through his country.¹ Road that way was first open year before last; 2s. was at first charged per head for passing, now 6d. through his intercession (Lafia to Eggga, fourteen days; Adamawa to Lafia, forty days). . . .

September 1. Visited King, about 100 Ilori [Ilorin] and Ibadan (Yoruba) people were there; King . . . showed presents sent him from Lagos, to show that road was safe. Everything sent overland reached him safely, said he had 2,000 men now armed with guns. . . .

September 2. Visited King; about 50 tailors at work, making uniforms out of cloth included in Her Majesty's presents; offered me an ostrich, a horse, and a gazelle, all which I declined, as unable to carry them to England . . . said he was sending to Sokoto, to the Sultan, the Koran and many guns, with other of the best things I had given him, to prove the sort of relations that subsisted between him and the white men; and that his [the King's] traders could supply the interior with all that was wanted; said he cared for nothing himself but guns and powder, and would 'dash' the rest away, but wished his people to trade in everything else they required, or had for sale. Prince Amaroo sent me present of an ox. King said he had forgiven the landlords of Eggga their overcharges, on the intercession of the Prince; but for him they would have had to answer for their offence with their heads. . . . Prince Almutapha, youngest son of Assuma Seraki,² late King of Nupe . . . said his brothers had gone to the camp, fighting against 'savages', living opposite Idah on the right bank. . . . The King's army now consisted, as I was informed, of 20,000 men, including 2,000 cavalry (no doubt an exaggeration). They had been encamped near the enemy's country for some months, but no engagement had yet taken place, which was naïvely accounted for to me 'from the dread they had of the enemy's arrows'. . . .

September 9. . . . Lagos messengers, who had brought Governor Glover's despatches to the King, visited me, and complained that, in consequence of their detention and inability to procure sufficient food from the King, they were starving; gave them one bag of cowries. . . . They stated that

¹ See above, Sect. VIII, p. 267.

² i.e. Usman [Usuman] Zaki: see pp. 240 and 293.

there was no palaver stirring between the Egbas and Ibadans. . . . Countries all settled and peaceable. I could even pass over land to Lagos without fear of detention, if I took a letter from King Masaba to Agutipe, head chief of Abeokuta (Egba), and another from him as regards the remainder of the journey. There was, however, a palaver between the people of Ibadan and their principal war chief, Ojoboh, in consequence of the guns, etc., he had procured from King Masaba, they fearing lest his increased strength might be used to tyrannise over them. They further stated that the Ilori and Ibadan people traded with the Nupe people, purchasing their country cloth, etc., but brought none of the productions of their country to the Nupe markets. . . .

September 10. [King] gave me outline history of Ibadan and Ilorin (Yoruba) and Abeokuta (Egba). . . . King said he was good friends with all the Yoruba people, and also with the Egbas, but of the latter principally with those under Agutipe, who was the only chief amongst them favourable to the English; and though head chief, he had control only over his own section. . . .

September 11. Visited King; all his cannon brought out, consisting of eight guns, ranging from 1 to 6-pounders, also round-shot and canister, expressed repeated thanks to Mr. Hemmingway, who had given him two 6-pounders. . . .

KINGSLY · *The Niger Delta at the End of the Century:*¹ *Bonny*

But Bonny! Well, come inside the bar and anchor off the factories: seaward there is the foam of the bar gleaming and wicked —white against a leaden sky and what there is left of Breaker Island. In every other direction you will see the apparently

¹ The six following extracts are taken from Mary Kingsley's two major works, *Travels in West Africa*, London, 1897, and *West African Studies*, London, 1899. 'Bonny', 'Mrs. S. and her Crates', 'The Fattening House,' and 'Ekpa' are from *Travels*, pp. 96–8, 77–8, 531, and 532–3; 'Social Mobility in Brass' and 'Metempsychosis' are from *Studies*, pp. 471–4, and 144–6. The appendix to *Studies*, from which the passage relating to Brass is taken, is by Count C. N. de Cardi, a European trader, who was in close touch with West African affairs from 1862 to 1896, described by Mary Kingsley as possessing 'an unrivalled knowledge of the natives of the Niger Delta'. Mary Kingsley (1862–1900), daughter of George Henry and niece of Charles Kingsley, made two journeys to West Africa during the years 1893–5. She died of typhoid, nursing Boer prisoners at Simonstown, South Africa. See Introduction, pp. 17–18.

endless walls of mangrove, unvarying in colour, unvarying in form, unvarying in height, save from perspective. Beneath and between you and them lie the rotting mud waters of Bonny River, and away up and down river, miles of rotting mud waters fringed with walls of rotting mud mangrove-swamp. The only break in them—one can hardly call it a relief to the scenery—are the gaunt black ribs of the old hulks, once used as trading stations, which lie exposed at low water near the shore, protruding like the skeletons of great unclean beasts who have died because Bonny water was too strong even for them.

Raised on piles from the mud shore you will see the white-painted factories and their great store-houses for oil; each factory likely enough with its flag at half-mast, which does not enliven the scenery either, for you know it is because somebody is 'dead again'. Throughout and over all is the torrential downpour of the wet-season rain, coming down night and day with its dull roar. I have known it rain six mortal weeks in Bonny River, just for all the world as if it were done by machinery, and the interval that came then was only a few wet days, whereafter it settled itself down to work again in the good West Coast waterspout pour for more weeks. . . .

While your eyes are drinking in the characteristics of Bonny scenery you notice a peculiar smell—an intensification of that smell you noticed when nearing Bonny, in the evening, out at sea. That's the breath of the malarial mud, laden with fever, and the chances are you will be down tomorrow. If it is near evening time now, you can watch it becoming incarnate, creeping and crawling and gliding out from the side creeks and between the mangrove-roots, laying itself upon the river, stretching and rolling in a kind of grim play, and finally crawling up the side of the ship to come on board and leave its cloak of moisture that grows green mildew in a few hours over all. Noise you will not be much troubled with: there is only that rain, a sound I have known make men who are sick with fever well-nigh mad, and now and again the depressing cry of the curlews which abound here. This combination is such that after six or eight hours of it you will be thankful to hear your shipmates start to work the winch. I take it you are hard up when you relish a winch. And you will say—let your previous experience of the world be what it may—Good Heavens, what a place.

Five times have I been now in Bonny River and I like it. You always do get to like it if you live long enough to allow the strange fascination of the place get a hold on you; but when I first entered it, on a ship commanded by Captain Murray in '93, in the wet season, i.e. in August, in spite of the confidence I had by this time acquired in his skill and knowledge of the West Coast, a sense of horror seized on me as I gazed upon the scene, and I said to the old coaster who then had charge of my education, 'Good Heavens, what an awful accident. We've gone and picked up the Styx.' He was evidently hurt and said, 'Bonny was a nice place when you got used to it', and went on to discourse on the past epidemic here, when nine men out of the resident eleven died in about ten days from yellow fever. I went ashore that evening to have tea with Captain Boler, and was told many more details about this particular epidemic, to say nothing of other epidemics. In one which the captain experienced, at the fourth funeral, two youngsters (junior clerks of the deceased) from drink brought on by fright, fell into the grave before the coffin, which got lowered on to them, and all three had to be hauled out again. 'Barely necessary though, was it?' said another member of the party, 'for those two had to have a grave of their own before next sundown.'

D E C A R D I · *Social Mobility in Brass*

The various grades of the people in Brass were the kings. Next came the chiefs and their sons who had by their own industry, and assisted in their first endeavours by their parents, worked themselves into a position of wealth. Then came the Winnaboes, a grade mostly supplied by the favourite slave of a chief, who had been his constant attendant for years, commencing his career by carrying his master's pocket-handkerchief and snuff-box, pockets not having yet been introduced into the native costume; after some years of this duty he would be promoted to going down to the European traders to superintend the delivery of a canoe of oil, seeing to its being tried, gauged, etc. This first duty, if properly performed, would lead to his being often sent on the same errand. This duty required a certain amount of *savez*, as the natives call intelligence, for he had to so look after his

master's interests that the pull-away boys that were with him in the canoe did not secrete any few gallons of oil that there might be left over after filling up all the casks he had been sent to deliver; nor must he allow the white trader to under-gauge his master's casks by carelessness or otherwise. If he was able to do the latter part of his errand in such a diplomatic manner that he did not raise the bile of the trader, that day marked the commencement of his upward career, if he was possessed of the bump of saving. All having gone off to the satisfaction of both parties, the trader would make this boy some small present according to the number of puncheons of oil he had brought down, seldom less than a piece of cloth worth about 2/6; and, in the case of canoes containing ten to fifteen puncheons, the trader would often dash him two pieces of cloth, and a bunch or two of beads. This present he would, on his return to his master's house, hand over to his mother (*id est*, the woman who had taken care of him from the time when he was first bought by his Brass master). She would carefully hoard this and all subsequent bits of miscellaneous property until he had in his foster-mother's hands sufficient goods to buy an angbar of oil—a measure containing thirty gallons. Then he would approach his master (always called 'father' by his slaves) and beg permission to send his few goods to the Niger markets the next time his master had a canoe starting—which permission was always accorded. He had next to arrange terms with the head man or trader of his master's canoe as to what commission he had to get for trading off the goods in the far market. In this discussion, which may occupy many days before it is finally arranged, the foster-mother figures largely; and it depends a great deal upon her standing in the household of the chief as to the amount of commission the trade boy will demand for his services. If the foster-mother should happen to be a favourite wife of the chief, well, then things are settled very easily, the trade boy most likely saying he was quite willing to leff-em to be settled any way she liked; if, on the contrary, it was one of the poorer women of the chief's house, Mr. Trade-boy would demand at least a quarter of the trade to commence with, and end up by accepting about an eighth. As the winnabo could easily double his property twice a year—and he was always adding to his store in his foster-mother's hands from presents received each time he

went down to the white trader with his father's oil—it did not take many years for him to become a man of means, and own canoes and slaves himself. Many times have I known cases where the winnabo has repeatedly paid up the debts of his master to the white man.

According to the law of the country, the master has the right to sell the very man who is paying his debts off for him; but I must say I have never heard a case of such rank ingratitude, though cases have occurred where the master has got into such low water and such desperate difficulties that his creditors under country law have seized everything he was possessed of, including any wealthy winnaboes he might have.

KINGSLEY · *Mrs. S. and her Crates*

... We had the usual scene with Mrs. S. Mrs. S., I may remark, is a comely and large black lady, an old acquaintance of mine, hailing from Opobo and frequently going up and down to Lagos, in connection with trading affairs of her own, and another lady with whom Mrs. S. is in a sort of partnership. This trade usually consists of extensive operations in chickens. She goes up to Lagos and buys chickens, brings them on board in crates, and takes them to Opobo and there sells them. It is not for me as a fellow woman to say what Mrs. S. makes on the transaction, nor does it interest the general public, but what does interest the general public (at least that portion of it that goes down to the sea in ships and for its sins wanders into Forcados River) is Mrs. S.'s return trip to Lagos with those empty crates and the determination in her heart not to pay freight for them. Wise and experienced chief officers never see Mrs. S.'s crates, but young and truculent ones do, and determine, in their hearts, she shall pay for them, advertising this resolve of theirs openly all the way from Opobo, which is foolish. When it comes to sending heavy goods overside into the branch boat at Forcados the wise chief officer lets those crates go, but the truculent one says,

'Here, Mrs. S., now you have got to pay for these crates.'

'Lor' mussy me, sar,' says Mrs. S., 'what you talk about?'

'These here chicken crates of yours, Mrs. S.'

'Lor' mussy me,' says Mrs. S., 'those crates no 'long to me sar.'

'Then,' says the truculent one, 'heave 'em over side. We don't want that stuff lumbering up our deck.'

Mrs. S. then expostulates and explains they are the property of a lone lorn lady in Lagos to whom Mrs. S. is taking them from the highest motives; motives 'such a nice gentleman' as the first officer must understand, and which it will be a pleasure to him to share in, and she cites instances of other chief officers who according to her have felt, as it were, a ray of sunlight come into their lives when they saw those chicken crates and felt it was in their power to share in the noble work of returning them to Lagos freight free. The truculent one then loses his head and some of his temper and avows himself a heartless villain, totally indifferent to the sex, and says all sorts of things, but my faith in the ultimate victory of Mrs. S. never wavers. My money is on her all the time, and she has never disappointed me, and when I am quite rich some day, I will give Mrs. S. purses of gold in the eastern manner for the many delicious scenes she has played before me with those crates in dreary Forcados.

KINGSLEY · *Calabar: The Fattening House*

A similar custom holds good in Okyon, Calabar district, where, should a girl have to leave the fattening-house, she must be covered with white clay. I believe this fattening-house custom in Calabar is not only for fattening up the women to improve their appearance, but an initiatory custom as well, although the main intention is now, undoubtedly, fattening, and the girl is constantly fed with fat-producing foods, such as fou-fou soaked in palm oil. I am told, but I think wrongly, that the white clay with which a Calabar girl is kept covered while in the fattening-house, putting on an extra coating of it should she come outside, is to assist in the fattening process by preventing perspiration. . . .

KINGSLEY · *Calabar: Ekpa*

The initiation of boys into a few of the elementary dogmas of the secret society by no means composes the whole work of the society. All of them are judicial, and taken on the whole they do an immense amount of good. The methods are frequently a little quaint. Rushing about the streets disguised in masks and drapery, with an imitation tail swinging behind you, while you lash out at every one you meet with a whip or cutlass, is not a European way of keeping the peace, or perhaps I should say maintaining the dignity of the law. But discipline must be maintained, and this is the West African way of doing it.

The Egbo of Calabar is a fine type of the secret society. It is exceedingly well developed in its details, not sketchy like Yasi, nor so red-handed as Poorah [Poro].¹ Unfortunately, however, I cannot speak with the same amount of knowledge of Egbo as I could of Poorah.

Egbo has the most grades of initiation, except perhaps Poorah, and it exercises jurisdiction over all classes of crime except witchcraft. Any Effik [Efik] man who desires to become an influential person in the tribe must buy himself into as high a grade of Egbo as he can afford, and these grades are expensive, £1,500 or £1,000 English being required for the higher steps, I am informed. But it is worth it to a great trader, as an influential Effik necessarily is, for he can call out his own class of Egbo and send it against those of his debtors who may be of lower grades, and as the Egbo methods of delivering its orders to pay up consist in placing Egbo at a man's doorway, and until it removes itself from that doorway the man dare not venture outside his house, it is most successful.

Of course the higher a man is in Egbo rank, the greater his power and security, for lower grades cannot proceed against higher ones. Indeed, when a man meets the paraphernalia of a higher grade of Egbo than that to which he belongs, he has to act as if he were lame, and limp along past it humbly, as if the sight of it had taken all the strength out of him, and needless to remark, higher grade debtors flip their fingers at lower grade creditors. . . .

¹ Mary Kingsley describes 'Yasi' as operating among the Igabwa of Gabon; the Poro functions principally in Sierra Leone and Liberia.

KINGSLERY · *Calabar: Metempsychosis*

I now turn to the Fetish of the Oil Rivers which I have called the Calabar school. The predominance of the belief there in reincarnation seems to me sufficient to separate it from the Gold Coast and Dahomey Fetish. Funeral customs, important in all Negro Fetish, become in the Calabar school exceedingly so. A certain amount of care anywhere is necessary to successfully establish the human soul after death, for the human soul strongly objects to leaving material pleasures and associations and going to, at best, an uninteresting underworld; but when you have not only got to send the soul down, but to bring it back into the human form again, and not any human form at that, but one of its own social status and family, the thing becomes more complicated still; and to do it so engrosses human attention, and so absorbs human wealth, that you do not find under the Calabar school a multitude of priest-served gods as you do in Dahomey and on the Gold Coast. Mind you, so far as I could make out while in the Calabar districts myself, the equivalents of those same gods were quite believed in; but they were neglected in a way that would have caused them in Dahomey, where they have been taught to fancy themselves, to wreck the place. Not only is care taken to send a soul down, but means are taken to see whether or no it has duly returned; for keeping a valuable soul, like that of a great Fetish proficient who could manage outside spirits, or that of a good trader, is a matter of vital importance to the prosperity of the Houses,¹ so when such a soul has left the House in consequence of some sad accident or another, or some vile witchcraft, the babies that arrive to the House are closely watched. Assortments of articles belonging to deceased members of the House are presented to it, and then, according to the one it picks out, it is decided who that baby really is—See, Uncle so-and-so knows his own pipe, etc.—and I have often heard a mother reproaching a child for some fault say, ‘Oh, we made a big mistake when we thought you were so-and-so’. I must say I think the absence of the idea of the deification of ancestors in West Africa shows up particularly strongly in the Calabar school, for herein you see so clearly that the dead do not pass into a higher, happier, state—that the

¹ On ‘Houses’, see Introduction, p. 37.

soul separate from the body is only a part of that thing we call a human being; and in West Africa the whole is greater than a part, even in this matter.

The pathos of the thing, when you have grasped the underlying idea, is so deep that the strangeness of it passes away, and you almost forget to hate the horrors of the slaughter that hang round Oil River funeral customs, or, at any rate, you understand the tenacity you meet with here of the right to carry out killing at funerals, a greater tenacity than confronted us in Gold Coast or Dahomey regions, because a different idea is involved in the affair. On the Gold Coast, for example, you can substitute wealth for the actual human victim, because with wealth the dead soul could, after all, make itself comfortable in Srahmandazi, but not so in the Rivers. Without slaves, wives, and funds, how can the dead soul you care for speak with the weight of testimony of men as to its resting place or position? Rolls of velvet or satin, and piles of manillas or doubloons alone cannot speak; besides, they may have been stolen stuff, and the soul you care for may be put down by the authorities as a mere thieving slave, a sort of mere American gold bug trying to pass himself off as a duke—or a descendant of General Washington—which would lead to that soul being disgraced and sent back in a vile form. Think how you yourself, if in comfortable circumstances, belonging to a family possessing wealth and power, would like father, mother, sister, or brother of yours who by this change of death had just left these things, to go down through death, and come back into life in a squalid slum!

D E C A R D I · *The Election of Ja-Ja¹*

When Elolly Pepple died (some say he was poisoned), shortly after the return of King Pepple in 1861, the Annie Pepple House

¹ From C. N. de Cardi, in Mary Kingsley, *West African Studies*, Appendix I, pp. 526–9 and 541–5. (For de Cardi, see above, p. 295.) The election of Ja-Ja (a European abbreviation for Jubo Jubogha) to the headship of the Annie Pepple House in Bonny took place in 1863. The civil war referred to at the end of the first of these passages broke out in 1869. Towards the end of the year Ja-Ja accepted terms of peace; but later moved out of Bonny, with a large proportion of the Bonny chiefs, and in 1870 established a new state in Andoni country—called Opobo, after the great early nineteenth-century Bonny king, Opubu—of which he was himself elected king. The second passage continues Ja-Ja's history from this point. See K. O. Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta*, ch. x, 'The Rise of Ja-Ja'.

was for some time left without a head. The various chiefs held repeated meetings, and the generally coveted honour did not seem to tempt any of them; by right of seniority a chief named Uranta (about the freest man in the house, some asserted he was absolutely free), was offered the place, but he, for private reasons of his own, refused. After Uranta there were Annie Stuart, Black Foobra and Warrasoo, all men of some considerable riches and consideration, but they also shirked the responsibility, for Elolly had been a very big trader, and owed the white men, it was said, at the time of his death, a thousand or fifteen hundred puncheons of oil, equivalent to between ten and fifteen thousand pounds sterling, and none of the foremost men of the House dared tackle the settlement of such a large debit account, fearing that the late chief had not left sufficient behind him to settle up with, without supplementing it with their own savings, which might end in bankruptcy for them, and their final downfall from the headship. At this time there was in the House a young man who had not very long been made a chief, though he had, for a considerable number of years, been a very good trader, and was much respected by the white traders for his honesty and the dependence they could place in him to strictly adhere to any promise he made in trade matters. This young chief was Ja Ja, and though he was one of the youngest chiefs in the house, he was unanimously elected to fill the office. He, however, did not immediately accept, though his being unanimously elected amounted almost to his being forced to accept.

He first visited *seriatim* each white trader, counted book (as they called going through the accounts of a House), and found that though there was a very large debit against the late chief, there was also a large credit, as a set off, in the way of sub-chief's work bars and the late Elolly's own work bars. At the same time, he arranged with each supercargo the order in which he would pay them off, commencing with those who were nearing the end of their voyage, and getting a promise from each that if he settled according to promise they would get their successor to give him an equal amount of credit that they themselves had given the late Elolly. A few days after, at a public meeting of the chiefs of the Annie Pepple House, he intimated his readiness to accept the headship of the House, distinctly

informing them that, as they had elected him themselves, they must assist him in upholding his authority over them as a body, which would be no easy task for him when there were so many older and richer chiefs in the House who were more entitled than he was to the post. The older chiefs, only too delighted to have found in Ja Ja someone to take the responsibility of the late chief's debts and the troubles of chieftainship off their shoulders, were prepared, and did solemnly swear, to assist him with their moral support, taking care not to pledge themselves to assist him in any of the financial affairs of the House.

Ja Ja had not been many months head of the Annie Pepple House before he began to show the old chiefs what kind of metal he was made of; for during the first twelve months he had selected from among the late Elolly's slaves no less than eighteen or twenty young men, who had already amassed a little wealth, and whom he thought capable of being trusted to trade on their own account, bought canoes for them, took them to the European traders, got them to advance each of these young men from five to ten puncheons' worth of goods, he himself standing guarantee for them. This operation had the effect of making Ja Ja immediately popular amongst all classes of the slaves of the late chief. At the same time, the slaves of the old chief of the House began to see that there was a man at the head of the House who would set a good example to their immediate masters. Some of these young men are now wealthy chiefs in Opobo, and as evidence that they had been well chosen, Ja Ja was never called upon to fulfil his guarantee.

Two years after Ja Ja was placed at the head of the House the late Elolly's debts were all cleared off, no white trader having been detained beyond the date Ja Ja had promised the late chief's debts should be paid by. In consideration for the prompt manner in which Ja Ja had paid up, he received from each supercargo whom the late chief had dealt with a present varying from five to ten per cent on the amount paid.

From this date Ja Ja never looked back, becoming the most popular chief in Bonny amongst the white men, and the idol of his own people, but looked upon with jealousy by the Manilla Pepple House, to which belonged the successful slave, Oko Jumbo, who was now, both in riches and power, the equal of Ja Ja, though never his equal in popularity amongst the

Europeans. Though there was a king in Bonny, and Waribo was the head of the Manilla House, *id est*, the king's House, Oko Jumbo and Ja Ja were looked upon by everyone as being the rulers of Bonny. The demon of jealousy was at work, and in the private councils of the Manilla House it was decided that Ja Ja must be pulled down, but the only means of doing it was a civil war. . . .

DE CARDI · *King Ja-Ja of Opobo*

Opobo became, under King Ja Ja's firm rule, one of the largest exporting centres of palm oil in the Delta, and for years King Ja Ja enjoyed a not undeserved popularity amongst the white traders who visited his river, but a time came when the price of palm oil fell to such a low figure in England that the European firms established in Opobo could not make both ends meet, so they intimated to King Ja Ja that they were going to reduce the price paid in the river, to which he replied by shipping large quantities of his oil to England, allowing his people only to sell a portion of their produce to the white men. The latter now formulated a scheme amongst themselves to divide equally whatever produce came into the river, and thus do away with competition amongst themselves. Ja Ja found that sending his oil to England was not quite so lucrative as he could wish, owing to the length of time it took to get his returns back, namely, about three months at the earliest, whilst selling in the river he could turn over his money three or four times during that period. He therefore tried several means to break the white men's combination, at last hitting upon the bright idea of offering the whole of the river's trade to one English house. The mere fact of his being able to make this offer shows the absolute power to which he had arrived amongst his own people. His bait took with one of the European traders; the latter could not resist the golden vision of the yellow grease thus displayed before him by the astute Ja Ja, who metaphorically dangled before his eyes hundreds of canoes laden with the coveted palm oil. A bargain was struck, and one fine morning the other white traders in the river woke up to the fact that their combination was at an end, for on taking their morning spy round the river

through their binoculars (no palm oil trader that respects himself being without a pair of these and a tripod telescope, for more minute observation of his opponent's doings) they saw a fleet of over a hundred canoes round the renegade's wharf, and for nearly two years this trader scooped all the trade. The fat was fairly in the fire now, and the other white traders sent a notice to Ja Ja that they intended to go to his markets. Ja Ja replied that he held a treaty, signed in 1873 by Mr. Consul Charles Livingstone, Her Britannic Majesty's Consul, that empowered him to stop any white traders from establishing factories anywhere above Hippopotamus Creek, and under which he was empowered to stop and hold any vessel for a fine of one hundred puncheons of oil. . . .

. . . In the meantime, clouds had been gathering round the head of King Ja Ja. His wonderful success since 1870 had gradually obscured his former keen perception of how far his rights as a petty African king would be recognised by the English Government under the new order of things just being inaugurated in the Oil Rivers; honestly believing that in signing the Protectorate treaty of December 19th, 1884, with the *sixth* clause crossed out, he had retained the right given him by the commercial treaty of 1873 to keep white men from proceeding to his markets, he got himself entangled in a number of disputes which culminated in his being taken out of the Opobo River in September, 1887, by her Britannic Majesty's Consul, Mr. H. H. Johnston, C.B., now Sir Harry Johnston,¹ and conveyed to Accra, where he was tried before Admiral Sir Hunt Grubbe, who condemned him to five years' deportation to the West Indies, making him an allowance of about £800 per annum. . . .

Poor Ja Ja did not live to return to his country and his people whom he loved so well, and whose conditions he had done so much to improve, though at times his rule often became despotic. One trait of his character may interest the public just now, as the Liquor Question in West Africa is so much *en evidence*, and that is, that he was a strict teetotaller himself and inculcated the same principles in all his chiefs. In his eighteen years' rule as a king in Opobo he reduced two of his chiefs for drunkenness—one he sent to live in exile in a small fishing

¹ See below, p. 308.

village for the rest of his life, the other, who had aggravated his offence by assaulting a white trader, he had deprived of all outward signs of a chief and put in a canoe to paddle as a pull-away boy within an hour of his committing the offence. . . .

. . . Shipwrecked people were always sure of kindly treatment if they fell into the hands of Ja Ja's subjects, for he had given strict orders to his people dwelling on the sea-shore to assist vessels in distress and convey anyone cast on shore to the European factories, warning them at the same time on no account to touch any of their property. He was the first king also in the Delta to restrain his people from plundering a wrecked ship, though the custom had been from time immemorial that a vessel wrecked upon their shores belonged to them by rights as being a gift from their Ju-Ju. . . .

JOHNSTON · *Nana*¹

The Coast district west of the Benin River estuary was till about 1893 subject to the semi-independent rule of a Jekri [Itsekiri] or Ijo [Ijaw] chief named Nana, usually called the Viceroy or King of Benin.

Nana before 1888 was deemed to be a very truculent person by the traders. I went to the coast settlements at the mouth of the Benin River to meet him in the winter of 1887–8, and found him different to the traders' descriptions; he was a fine-looking Negro, dressed in somewhat Mohammadan fashion in flowing garments. I investigated his complaints and found them in most cases justified. The trading houses came to an agreement with him, and it was understood that the interior markets under Nana's control were open to them. Nana then gave me an invitation to come and see him at his town in the interior

¹ From Sir Harry Johnston, *The Story of My Life*, London, 1923, pp. 212–13. Harry Johnston (1858–1927) served as Vice-Consul in the Cameroons and Acting Consul in the Oil Rivers from 1885 to 1888. Since as Acting Consul he had been largely responsible for organizing the removal of Ja-Ja of Opobo, another great self-made merchant prince (see preceding extract), and since Nana was also eventually deposed and deported, in 1894, there is a certain irony about the last sentence of this extract. For a full account of this phase of Johnston's life, see Roland Oliver, *Sir Harry Johnston and the Scramble for Africa*, London, 1957, ch. 4. For further material on Nana, see G. W. Nevill, 'Nana Ohimú of Benin', *J. Afr. Soc.* xiv, pp. 162–7.

(? Ogbobin). I decided to trust myself to him, and accordingly was taken up to this place in a magnificently arrayed canoe. I was greatly astonished at its large buildings of white-washed clay, neatly thatched, its broad and well-swept streets, and the good order of its population. I was lodged in a really comfortable house where he fed me with well-cooked meals, and in the afternoons and evenings entertained me with interesting and sometimes spectacular displays of athletic sports and dancing. It was almost like taking a part on the stage in a fantastic ballet. Hundreds of women, dressed in silks and velvets, and armed with large long-handled fans of horse-hide or antelope-hide, executed elaborate and on the whole decorous dances. Perfect order was maintained. A full moon lit up the strange scenes which were aglow with rosy light from the immense bonfires.

I have seldom enjoyed more any African experience than my visit to Nana: the comfort of my lodging, well-cooked food, the ordered quiet; his politeness and regard for the value of time. He himself talked fairly fluently 'Coast' English, so that intelligent conversation was possible with him. In addition he was a considerable African linguist in the tongues of the Niger Delta. He was greatly interested in my attempt to write down these languages; and far more intelligent in African philology than most of the white men (save missionaries) in the Niger Delta. I wished I could have made his acquaintance a year earlier as he would have been a valuable adviser in Delta politics. . . .

PAYNE · *Bishop Crowther and Ecclesiastical Self-Government*¹

The Episcopate of the late Bishop Crowther was in our humble opinion a successful one. It covered the space of 27 years, whilst before it was constituted, the Bishop, who as an ordinary

¹ From a memorial, dated 7 Dec. 1892, addressed to the Archbishop of Canterbury and the proper authorities of the Church of England, from the clergy and representative laymen of the Lagos Native Church, published in *Payne's Lagos and West African Almanack and Diary*, 1894, p. 135. The controversy over the Bishopric of the Niger Diocese which forms the background to this memorandum, and which provoked a secessionist movement within the Church, is discussed at length by Dr. Ajayi in his *Christian Missions and the Making of Nigeria*, ch. viii. For Bishop Samuel Crowther, see p. 243.

clergyman had founded the Niger Mission in 1857, had always been its leader. The facts of his Mission—e.g. thousands of converts won from the most debasing kind of heathenism and idolatry, and many of them from cannibalism, infanticide and other cruel practices also; Christian congregations, Churches and Schools here and there in what was before a moral and spiritual wilderness; Niger-born Native Agents among those serving the Mission and Church, and the aggressive character of the profession of Christianity by those converts especially in the Delta, and all this within the last 32 years—facts testified by all who know the Niger, and especially by those who, from personal acquaintance with it and its people generally before the introduction of Christian Missionary work into it, are able to contrast the present with the past, witness to this success. This success, we respectfully submit, supplies a warrant for the continuation of the Native Episcopate.

The elevation of the late Bishop Crowther to the Episcopate in 1864, was declared by the C.M.S. which, under God, was mainly instrumental in bringing it about, . . . to be an experiment to prove the capacity of negroes for evangelizing important sections of the African Continent by themselves, and without the stimulus of the presence and supervision of Europeans, and for exercising the higher offices in the Church—an experiment whose success was very generally desired in England, especially on account of the very heavy mortality which had always prevailed among European missionaries in the African mission all through its long course. The clergy and lay agents that worked under this Episcopate, which was often exercised amidst circumstances of peculiar difficulty and trial, were almost always natives.

But attempts have been made the last few years on account of moral weakness discovered in some of the infant Churches that have been gathered in, and serious faults in some of the agents and the like, to pronounce the experiment a failure, and the negro incapable for a responsible trust and for an independent life; and, in spite of the century of training and teaching he has had, unfit still to be set free from his pupilage and the leading strings of European superintendence.

We on our part do not find ourselves able to subscribe to this pronouncement with the facts of the mission to which we

have already referred before us, and also the fact that some of the Apostolic Churches of which we read in Scripture were not exempt from serious faults. . . .

Christianity has seen about a century in West Africa generally, and yet it to this day wears the character of an exotic. It has not succeeded to root itself into the soil; to get the people generally to identify their interest and their lives with its existence and that of its institutions, and exercise towards it that devotion which they or their ancestors had exhibited towards Heathenism.

There is no strong guarantee for permanence and continuity in this exotic character, and Africans who believe in the regenerating power of the Religion and wish to see it cover the whole country, who have some knowledge of its fate in North Africa after many centuries of existence, . . . are naturally anxious to see a repetition of the sad and terrible calamity avoided.

It is our conviction that one of the reasons for the character which Christianity now manifests in Africa is the fact that it has been held too long in a state of dependence; and that it has been too long in the habit of looking to its foreign Parent for immediate guidance and direction in almost everything, and this, you will admit, does not make much for the development of that manly independence and self-reliance which are so essential for the development of a strong people and a vigorous institution.

KIRK · Brass: *The 1895 Revolt*¹

(i) The Chiefs of Brass to Sir C. MacDonald.²

Nimbe, Brass, February 14, 1895.

Sir,

We beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 13th instant with thanks.

We know that what you said must come to pass. You said

¹ From Sir John Kirk, *Report on the Disturbances at Brass*, Cmd. 7977, Africa, No. 3 (1896). For Kirk (1832–1922), see R. Coupland, *The Exploitation of East Africa 1856–1890*, London, 1939. Both the letter from the Brass chiefs and the statement of their oral evidence before the Commission are included as appendices to the Report. For an account of the Brass revolt, and the conflict between the Brass people and the Royal Niger Company which gave rise to it, see Burns, *History of Nigeria*, London, 1948, pp. 151–4, and John Flint, *Sir George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria*, Oxford, 1960.

² Sir Claude Macdonald, Commissioner and Consul-General, Niger Coast Protectorate, 1891–6.

that one or two Chiefs must come down and see you and return home unmolested. We have before wrote you that whenever you arrive in this river and send for us, night or day, without hesitation we answered your summons. . . . Every river has markets to trade to feed themselves. And this trade that we had and finished to-day had been just began and finished, we would not have felt it so much. But the trade with Europeans had begun since our forefathers' time up to date. And as it is snatched away from our hands by the Niger Company, we really felt it keenly. You must please consider and investigate this matter. A person who has been accustomed to eat bread and knows its sweetness from his youth to manhood happens to offered by another man to eat dust instead of bread. At the very time he hears the word dust he will go mad. Starvation brings a man to insanity. . . .

As we before said, if part of the Niger River is not given to us the war with the Niger Company will not stop; if given, we shall be glad and thankful.

We remain, &c.

(signed) The Chiefs of Brass.¹

- (ii) Proceedings—1st day, June 10 1895: evidence of the Brass Chiefs.

We do not grow our own food with the exception of a few plantains. Our soil is too poor. We get our yams, &c, and our cattle from the Niger—chiefly from Abo and Onitsha.

We usually live on fish, yams, plantains and cassava. We eat very little meat.

Our fathers used to trade as far up the Niger as Idah above Onitsha, and also a great deal in the Assay markets in the Warri branch, but not in Warri itself. We do not trade in the New Calabar markets, the Niger markets being quite sufficient for us, if we were allowed to trade in them all as our fathers used to do.

Brass and Ijaw languages are very similar, so the tribes understand each other.

We get our slaves as a rule from the Ibos; they cost from £10

¹ Representing the Brass Chiefs and people, their selection being unanimous,—Chiefs Warri and Karemma, representing Bassambri, and Chiefs Nathaniel Hardstone and Thomas Okeu, representing Nimbe.

to £20 each. These slaves rise up, and, if worthy, many become Headmen and Chiefs.

We do not call ourselves Brass men, but Nimbe.

There are many Christians in our country; but many have gone back to their old faith, owing to the oppressions of the Niger Company.

We built both churches, the one at Brass and the other at Nimbe, but we had good trade in those days.

We got our cannon a very long time ago, with the exception of one bought by Chief Warri, two years ago, from a trader in the river, named Jinks. The cannon having been Mr. Jinks' property for years. We have very few cannon left; they were all taken and destroyed by the Queen's men when our town was destroyed; the few we have got are very old, chiefly Portuguese ones. We have no machine guns.

The closing of our markets by the Niger Company has cheapened the price of oil, but when we smuggle in oil we have to pay the villagers *en route* 'hush money', and so, to us, the oil is expensive. . . .

MONTEIL · *The Empire of Sokoto under 'Abd al-Rahmān'*

Sultan 'Abd al-Rahmān ascended the throne in March, 1891, in peculiarly unfavourable circumstances. The increasingly aggressive behaviour of the King of Argungu²—a Hausa by nationality, it must be remembered . . . had not been punished, and was a source of grave danger to the imperial government.

Here are some extracts from my diary, assessing the political situation at the time when I arrived in Sokoto:—

'19 October [1891], the date of my first audience with the Commander of the Faithful.³

'The King, though about 55 years of age, is young as regards

¹ From P.-L. Monteil, *De Saint-Louis à Tripoli par le Lac Tchad*, Paris, 1895, pp. 248–55. Monteil (1855–1925) made this journey, which took him through the Fulani Empire and Bornu, during the years 1890–2. 'Abd al-Rahmān was the son of Abu Bakr Atiku (see Sect. VII, p. 221), and the grandson of 'Uthmān dan Fodio. He reigned from 1891 to 1902, dying shortly before the British occupation.

² About sixty miles south-west of Sokoto.

³ Here and elsewhere Monteil uses the Fulfulde term *Lamido-Dioulbé* or *Lam-Dioulbé*, equivalent to Amir al-Mu'minin, meaning 'Commander of the Faithful', to refer to the Sultan of Sokoto.

experience of power. He has not yet had time to assert himself. He retains Sokoto as the nominal capital, but resides at Wurno. He came here on the eve of my arrival, in order—so they say—to assemble a large military force. . . .

'Here, as in Gwandu, Fulani power is very precarious. For one thing, the conquerors have intermarried a great deal with the Hausa population, so that it is almost impossible to discover traces of pure Fulani stock; for another, a long period of inactivity, combined with relative commercial prosperity, have softened both their religious fanaticism and their military temper. Moreover, from the foundation of the dynasty, but especially after the reign of 'Aliyu,¹ there has been a tendency to ignore the attacks both of Gobir and of Kebbi, so long as they do not directly injure the dominant group. . . . Here they have for long shown an attitude of unconcern to the raids and attacks of the King of Argungu, because, as they saw it, Sokoto had nothing to fear. But last year's aggressions, and now this recent raid on Gandi,² have at last woken up the authorities. They have realised that the people are every day becoming more disaffected, above all because the government has failed to fulfil its responsibilities; and they are now seriously afraid lest the Hausa rulers of independent Kebbi may take their place. They have become aware of a stirring of [Hausa] national feeling, which was checked during the period immediately following the conquest, but has now emerged again in a situation in which the prestige and the vitality of the conquerors have been weakened.

'Hence the reaction: the King has sworn to destroy Argungu. . . . One significant fact is that the Fulfulde language is banned, as much in official as in ordinary social relations. The Fulani who works for me as an interpreter is put in his place by the humblest Hausa, without a protest, here as in Mauri or Kebbi. There is undoubtedly a move to develop a Hausa nationalism. But I fear it is too late. The King, in spite of his daily military excursions . . . , does not seem to have taken the measure of the role which he must play in order to avert the collapse of his empire, which I would guess is by no means a remote possibility.'

¹ For 'Aliyu Babba (reigned 1842–59), successor of 'Atīqu, see Sect. VII, p. 222.

² A little to the east of Sokoto.

However, . . . thanks to his energy and perseverance, the Commander of the Faithful, 'Abd al-Rahmān, disproved all these prophecies of mine. He did in fact succeed in warding off the danger which threatened his empire, by his attack on Argungu in March, 1891 [? 1892], and by compelling Kebbi, Mauri, and Jerma¹ to return to their allegiance. . . .

The Waziri shared my view—that the only thing I could do was to sell my merchandise, in order to buy what I needed. But he was doubtful how I might achieve this, since Sokoto was not a commercial centre. 'As for the Commander of the Faithful', he assured me, 'he is without resources. He has only been in power a year, and he has had to spend his own personal fortune, as well as that which he inherited from his predecessor when he succeeded to the throne, to build up a body of supporters and to rally as many people round him as possible.' 'For you realise', he added, 'that this is a critical time'—alluding to the operations then being planned.

For two days we debated this problem without reaching any conclusion. I had neither credit nor cash. But the Emperor was fascinated: his interest was aroused—he wanted my merchandise. In sheer exhaustion I offered to leave it behind. There were loud protests: that in that case everyone would say the Commander of the Faithful had abused the laws of hospitality to rob me. At last I found myself obliged to accept the following solution: the Commander of the Faithful would give me a bill for 72 slaves, drawn on Yola, but the man who would accompany me would negotiate this bill in Kano, and pay me the whole amount of my debt. To make this transaction possible, it was necessary to multiply by five the sum which was due to me. A slave at Yola is valued at 100,000 cowries. The actual sum owing to me was 1,200,000, or a total of twelve slaves. To permit the bill to be negotiated in Kano, the total sum due to me was made up to 60 slaves. Over and above this, the Commander of the Faithful made me a present of a million cowries, the equivalent of ten slaves, plus 200,000, or two slaves, for my interpreter—making a grand total of 72 slaves.

I have stressed this point, in order to show how well developed are ideas of trade and credit among the Hausa. . . .

¹ Mauri and Jerma, north-west of Kebbi and east of the river Niger, in what is now the autonomous Republic of Niger.

On the 1st November we reached Gandhi. Bandawaki, the King of Gandhi, brother of the Commander of the Faithful, entertained me. He is a man of 45, with intelligent eyes and a refined face, but with a certain look of duplicity. He is the son-in-law of the Waziri, who has delegated to him some of the functions which attach to his own office and which he cannot himself carry out.

The Hausa Empire is divided into provinces, each of which has its governor, bearing the title of 'Sarki'. Within his province the Sarki has the right to administer justice, both in major and minor matters; he raises troops, and receives taxes. The office is hereditary in the same family, except that the appointment must be ratified by the Emperor, who performs the investiture.

Next in rank to the Sarki comes the Galadima,¹ a kind of lieutenant, nominated by the Emperor, but always chosen among those who stand high in the order of succession, when he is not the heir presumptive himself.

The Sarkis of the various provinces owe the Emperor entire obedience. They furnish him with a military force, armed and maintained at their own expense, for his expeditions. They also pay him an annual tribute deducted from the receipts of taxation. Apart from these ties of vassalage, they administer their provinces in an almost independent manner. None the less, the Emperor reserves a right of control over their administration: hence those who hold high office at the imperial court have allocated to them a certain number of provinces, which it is their responsibility to inspect, over whose affairs they exercise a central oversight, and on which they report to the Emperor.

Thus the Galadima, the heir presumptive of the Empire, has in his charge the provinces of Katsina, Kazauri,² Magazingara (the neighbourhood of Magami n'Didi),³ and Kebbi. Sokoto and Wurno came under the special administration of the Sarki n'Kebbi. The Sarki n'Saffara, son of the Commander of the Faithful, supervises Zamfara and Daura. The Waziri has

¹ For the Galadima, see Introduction, p. 22 and Sect. VIII, p. 262.

² A state carved out of the adjoining states of Kano, Katsina, and Daura, by the Fulani. See Hogben, *The Muhammadan Emirates of Nigeria*, pp. 85–86.

³ About 65 miles east of Sokoto, in the direction of Kano.

responsibility for the provinces of Kano, Zazzau [Zaria], and Adamawa. But, in view of the multiplicity of his functions, the Waziri delegates some of his powers to Bandawaki, King of Gandi, . . . whose principal duty it is to visit Kano, Mauri, and Adamawa, and speed up the collection of their taxes. Every year Bandawaki sets out to make this tour of the provinces, which lasts seven or eight months. Later I was to find him at Kano, whence he moved on to Yola.

Bandawaki, acting on the instructions which he had received, gave me a guide to accompany me to Kano and negotiate the above-mentioned bill. The man he selected was called Abu Bakr. I was surprised to hear this man speak to me in English, very bad English certainly, but adequate to enable me to understand very simple statements. . . . He had served two-and-a-half years in the Belgian Congo. . . .

BABA OF KARO · *Hausaland in the 1890's: Slavery and Family Life*¹

Ibrahim Dara, my father's father, was killed by his own mare which he had bought himself. He always took her hay to her, and one evening while he was feeding her she kicked him; he fell on his back and lay still. Much later that evening his family started looking for him, but when they found him they saw that he was dead. Then there was crying and wailing, crying and wailing; that is what our parents told us. . . .

Ibrahim Dara had three houses, one at Karo, one at Zarewa, and one in Zaria City.² If they had to flee from Zarewa in time of war, they went to Zaria and took refuge inside the walls of the city. The master and all his family would flee, taking all their slaves with them so that the raiders could not seize them. They would leave behind a few strong, reliable slaves, who would run away into the bush if they saw raiders coming and hide in the trees. The invaders would go into the compounds

¹ From M. F. Smith, *Baba of Karo*, London, 1954, pp. 38–40, 42–3, and 50. Baba (1877–1951), an elderly Hausa woman, of Kanuri origin, related her autobiography in Hausa to Mrs. Smith, who translated, arranged, and annotated it.

² The town of Zarewa lies about twenty-five miles north of Zaria: Karo is a hamlet a few miles west of Zarewa.

and when they found no one, burn them. The corn would all burn, and that household would go hungry. . . .

When I was young at Karo the *rinji*¹ was to the west of us and our compounds were to the east, the slaves lived in one place and we in another; they used to come and greet us and bring bundles of guineacorn, groundnuts and yams, cotton and sweet potatoes. There were more than 250 of them, and there were crowds of us. Everyone in our family had his part of the *rinji*. Even now we are still there—last year I went and visited them all.

Ibrahim Dara collected money and went to Zaria market and bought some of his slaves, then they had children. When he died some of them fled, and the remainder were divided up and given to his children. He had one big *rinji*, the only *rinji* in our family, Anguwan Karo. He freed Sarkin Gandu.² . . . He freed Hajera and gave her a dowry and arranged a marriage for her because of her goodness; whatever you said to her, she said 'Yes, very well'. Her father and mother were Dangwari and Mada, but they were not freed. When Dara died at Karo he left 130 slaves. Eighty fled, in the morning we saw they had gone—they did not want to stay with his children. The family was wailing because he was dead and the slaves saw their chance and ran away. . . .

When the children of slaves grew up, they were married, they were joined in a marriage of kinship.³ When anyone in the *rinji* had a child, there was a naming ceremony and a ram was killed and porridge made.⁴ The child was freed and it came into our family. We took part in one another's ceremonies, there was 'kinship'. When the *malams* had come in the morning and given the infant its name, the grown-ups collected us children together and the head of the family got up and told us: 'You see your brother so-and-so; he is your younger brother.'

¹ *Rinji*, the place where the slaves lived. In this case (as often) the *rinji* was a separate village settlement, worked by slaves.

² *Sarkin Gandu*, the slave who acted as manager of the family farm. (*Gandu*, joint family organized for farming.)

³ 'Marriages between children of slaves of the same master . . . came under the heading of "kinship marriages" . . . preferred by the master to marriage with an outsider' (Smith, op. cit., p. 257).

⁴ i.e., the children of pagan slaves became Muslims at the naming-ceremony held on the seventh day after birth. 'Porridge—*tuwo*—is the staple food of the Hausa of this area, and is prepared from grain, usually guineacorn. . . .' (loc. cit.)

They became kinsfolk, they were not called *dimajai*,¹ sons of slaves, they were called brothers. . . . When they grew up some of these children of our slaves married us and some of them married outside the family.

That is, the slaves in our *rinji* were the ones who had been bought in the market; all their children were freed. Sarkin Gandu (whom Ibrahim Dara freed) had four wives; his children were married in the town, one married a blacksmith and one married a praise-singer. The reason why Dara freed his slaves was because he wanted to be rewarded when he died—because of religion. It is like giving alms. But if masters of slaves did not attend to religion, they did not do it at all. . . .

In the afternoons after work on the *gandu* farm was finished, some of the slaves worked at crafts. Some wove on the men's narrow loom, some were brokers in the market, some were salt-sellers, some sold kolanuts or sugar-cane or sweet potatoes or cotton, or other things. Some were dyers, some grew onions or sugar-cane in marsh-plots. Some just farmed their own plots. Those who did crafts had been born in the *rinji*; slaves who were bought in the market could not do anything except farming. If a slave had a son he would see a craftsman working, he would go and watch him and he would learn. The bought slaves spoke 'Gwari',² but their children spoke Hausa. . . .

Our slaves were from many tribes, there was no sort of slave that we hadn't got in our *rinji*. When they had children, the children were given our inherited facial marks, the Barebare mark down their nose.³ Not all masters gave their slaves' children their own marks. When the boys were seven years old they were taught to say their prayers and they went to the Koran school and learnt to recite passages from the Koran; some of the girls went, too. There were several teachers, Malam Yusufu and Malam Tanko and Malam Audu Bawan Allah. There was no *bori* dancing in our hamlet except for one of our slaves, Mada,

¹ *Dimajai*, or *cucanawa*, is the Hausa term for slaves' children. The status of *dimajai* differed from the status of slaves and from that of free commoners: they remained on the owner's *rinji*, worked for him, and had to obtain his permission to marry; but, unlike slaves, they could not be sold (*ibid.*, pp. 257-8).

² Gwari, the term used for the pagan peoples from whom the Zaria Hausa drew their slaves.

³ Barebare, i.e. Kanuri, since Baba's family had come originally from Bornu. Cf. Sect. III, p. 89, n. 3.

a Gwari, who was sometimes possessed.¹ We used to go to the compounds of the prostitutes² in Zarewa town and watch them *bori*-dancing. . . .

In our own compound there was no disagreement, nothing of that kind. My father's wives joked and laughed together, they had nothing to do with quarrelling. They made food, they used to give me nice things, they would say 'Let's do this', or 'Let's do that', and they did not bicker. My father farmed and he was a Koranic student, a *malam*, he taught the boys to recite from the Book. When we went to Karo, the slaves would sweep the compound and the grain would be distributed, they would come and say 'Greetings, blessings on you! The people from the town have come back.' Then there would be games and rejoicing and we would play together.

GENTIL · *Rabeh in Bornu*³

In spite of the horror aroused by contemplation of all the crimes which Rabeh committed, one cannot help feeling a certain admiration for him. After conquering Bornu and Bagirmi with a handful of men, he dreamed of the conquest of Wadai, which awaited his arrival in trepidation. Without our intervention, he would have carried out his plan in the course of the very year in which he met his death. . . . Death, fortunately, prevented

¹ *Bori*, 'the Hausa term for a cult of spirit-possession', Smith, op. cit., pp. 260–1. Cf. Sect. VIII, p. 267, and J. Greenberg, *Influence of Islam on a Sudanese Religion*, New York, 1946, pp. 48–53. The men of Baba's family, as Muslim *mallams*, were naturally opposed to *bori*-dancing.

² The Hausa term, *karuwai*, does not strictly correspond to 'prostitutes', since it covers divorced women who remain unmarried in general (Smith, op. cit., p. 25).

³ From Émile Gentil, *La chute de l'empire de Rabeh*, Paris, 1902, pp. 236–8. Gentil (1866–1914) was appointed by Savorgnan de Brazza as his administrative officer in Ubangi in 1897; led the southern French force which converged with forces from the west (Niger) and north (Algeria) on Chad early in 1900; and directed the campaign which led to the defeat and death of Rabeh at the Battle of Kusseri (22 Apr. 1900), near the confluence of the Shori and Logone rivers, the site of the earlier battle referred to on p. 254. Rabeh (Rābiḥ), sometimes known as Rabeh Zubair, was a Sudanese from Sennar who served first under al-Zubair Rahma Mansūr, and later under al-Zubair's son, Sulaimān, in the Bahr al-Ghazal and Darfur during the 1870's. After Sulaimān's power had been broken, in 1879, Rabeh moved westwards, organizing a mobile military state in the central Sudan; in 1893 he defeated the Shehu of Bornu, Hāshim, and for the next seven years governed the Bornu Empire from his headquarters at Dikwa. (See Urvoy, *Histoire de l'empire du Bornou*, pp. 126–30, and R. Hill, *Biographical Dictionary of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan*, Oxford, 1951, pp. 312–13.)

him from fulfilling his ambitions. Yet they were not without a certain greatness, if one may judge by his actual achievements in Bornu. As soon as the country had submitted, the new Sultan set about the task of reorganisation. He quickly realised the extreme weakness of the ruler's position—an outcome of the Bornu feudal system, balancing the chiefs' power against the king's, and thus creating a number of states within the state. But he saw also that he, as a newcomer, could not himself undertake the direct administration of a country whose language and customs were unfamiliar to him and his followers. He therefore left the local chiefs in charge of their various districts, so as to provide a liaison between people and ruler; but made them subordinate to his own chief officers, who took his orders, and whose reliability he ensured by keeping them near him. In fact, he replaced the old feudal government by a sort of military dictatorship. He organised taxes, demanding from each district a regular fixed sum, of which he took half himself, leaving half for the military and administrative chiefs to share. His own revenues do not seem to have been spent simply on pleasures and luxuries. He carried out a plan for a public exchequer, to cover the maintenance of his troops, organised in companies of from 150 to 250 musketeers, the erection of healthier and more comfortable buildings, and the storing of provisions with a view to future campaigns. The revenue which he obtained from taxation was further augmented by plunder seized in raids on Bagirmi and the pagan countries; so it may easily be seen that Rabeh, far from impoverishing Bornu, substantially increased its wealth, at the expense of its neighbours. Thus it might have been anticipated—contrary to our original ideas—that after quite a short interval the population of Bornu would have not merely acquiesced in his regime, but even accepted it with satisfaction. . . .

BACKWELL · *The Fulani Empire: Resistance and Compromise*¹

- (i) From the slave of his Master, Sarki Kudu, Zuberu to his chief, Sarkin Musulmi Abderrahman, son of Atiku, greetings.

After greetings to inform you of the terrible trouble which has befallen us. The Christians have brought war on us. We were warned and believed not, but I heard this news last year from Nupe. The man who heard the news had it from the mouth of Mallam Ahmadu, a Katsina man in Nupe. But he who told me is with us and after we heard further news, after our affairs were ruined through the Christians. Further to tell you that the rule of the Christians has reached our town Yola, but not over me as I escaped and those with me, or over our dependent villages. But I have left, and now to-day there are three days between me and Yola, and I am seeking a place to hide from the severity of the earth's dampness, until it dries. You will, learn, if Allah wills, of the position between us and the Christians. I will not be double-faced towards you and the Christians. My allegiance is to you by Allah and the Prophet and after you to the Imam Mahdi. I shall not follow the unbelievers even if my towns are captured. The Prophet declared that he who joins his abode with the unbeliever or dwells with him, is among them. But we pray Allah that it may not happen. I have sent you thirty cows by Barau, my present to you. Peace be on him who follows the faith.

- (ii) From Sarkin Kano to Waziri Muhammadu Buhari, greetings.

After greetings I have seen your letter and honour it. We

¹ From H. F. Backwell, *The Occupation of Hausaland*, Lagos, 1927, pp. 67–74, Letters 112, 125, and 128. This collection of Arabic letters was found in the house of Muḥammad Buhari, the Waziri of Sokoto, when the city was occupied by British forces in 1903. The three letters reproduced in translation here were addressed to the central government in Sokoto during the later stages of the British occupation, in 1901–2: the first to Sultan 'Abd al-Rahmān (see Sect. VIII, p. 313); the second to the Waziri; and the third to 'Abd al-Rahmān's successor, Sultan Attahiru. They reflect different attitudes to the invaders: (i) from Zubeiru, Lamido of Adamawa, and (ii) from 'Aliyu, Sarkin Kano, support the idea of a *lutte à l'outrance*; (iii) from Muhammadu Marafa (later Sultan of Sokoto, 1915–24) advocates a policy of compromise to preserve the dynasties. For Zubeiru, see Kirk Greene, *Adamawa Past and Present*, particularly pp. 141–4.

clearly understand from it that you are following my advice, that both we and you seek for a plan which will be of assistance to our religion and to earth and heaven. I have found no more useful plan for all Moslems and for us and for you, than as I wrote in my letter which my messenger brought to you, that we leave this country all of us—that is my clear conviction—as these dogs have surrounded us and threaten to overcome us. May Allah grant that your eyes are opened speedily. May Allah assist us both and lighten our troubles. Peace.

(iii) From Muhammadu Marafa, son of Sarkin Musulmi Ahmadu, to his great brother, the Sarkin Musulmi Muhammadu Attahiru. May Allah hear our prayers about him. Greetings, etc.

After greetings to inform you that we have no more news beyond what we have sent to you and are awaiting the arrival of the spy we sent. If we hear any news of them we will send to you. Further, I earnestly beseech you, in God's name let no one hear a suggestion of our departure from your mouth in this land, as this would mean ruin for our affairs. Our subjects and people, who are within the boundaries of our land, would certainly throw off their allegiance to us on hearing such news. We should get no assistance from them of what they have promised to us. To sum up let us sit and wait the issue of the matter. Help lies with Allah alone, and if He makes easy for us this matter, He is all powerful. If we remain in our kingdom, all will be ordered for us by the Great Ordainer.

If circumstances indicating departure arise, let us depart, otherwise not. But let us only prepare—till such time as God decrees for our departure.

SECTION NINE

Epilogue

HASSAN AND SHUAIBU · *Scepticism*¹

About five miles to the south-east of the town of Abuja near Zuba of the Koro, a single rock, shaped like a kneeling elephant, rises massive from the plain. Since the earliest times the men of Abuja have told many different stories about the rock, and even today most people believe that certain spirits have their dwelling at its foot, and that a band of Pagans serve them.

A very thick forest surrounds the foot of the rock, and deep inside a family of Koro live in a single small village, and it is their chief who is the priest of the fetish of the rock. This fetish lives in a small rock near the other, and it is at the foot of this small rock that the sacrifices are made. The duty of these people is to keep others away from the rock, and indeed nobody goes near them except some of their fellow-tribesmen who live in a village named Chachi on the outside edge of the forest, and not many of these will ever venture far inside. So few people have dared to go to the fetish village that it is commonly supposed to be invisible to human sight.

In former times, just before the beginning of the rains, each year the Emir would send a black ox, a black he-goat and a black dog to the villagers of Chachi to be handed over to the guardians of the rock for sacrifice to the fetish. Even at the present day a fire is sometimes seen burning on the top of the rock, and when this fire is seen, men say that before the year is out something of note will happen in the land of Abuja. It is certain that no human hand lights this fire, for no man born of woman could climb the sheer smooth granite flanks of the rock,

¹ From Hassan and Shuaibu, *A Chronicle of Abuja*, pp. 86–87, ‘the Zuma Rock’. See above Sect. VIII, p. 267.

and none but the birds or perhaps a passing airman have ever seen its top.

Two years ago for the first time a party of men from Abuja, the District Officer, the Iyan Bakin Kasuwa who is now our Emir, the Sarkin Malamai who is now the Sarkin Ruwa, together with the Chief of Zuba who is now the Sarkin Yamma, went to find out the truth about the rock. It was said that we should never reach it alive, and the priest would not see us if we did. It was said that this priest wore no clothes and neither cut nor dressed his hair; and it was said that in the old days human beings, usually virgins, were sacrificed to this fetish.

We went to Chachi, and the men of Chachi would not come into the forest with us, but they showed us the path leading to the village. This we followed for a long way over difficult ground and came at last to the village. The fetish priest had some unexpected visitors that day! We sat outside his house and all the people came out to welcome us. There they talked to us in proper Hausa—not in any strange tongue which needed interpreting. We found that all the stories we had heard were nonsense—the priest was just like other men, properly clothed and shaved as we were. He showed us the place where the former priests are buried, and said that he knew nothing of human sacrifices but believed that at one time they had been made. Nowadays the sacrifice is made, not to the rock itself, but to the spirits of the dead priests, his ancestors.

Thus we were the first men, except for some of their fellow-tribesmen of Chachi, ever to visit these guardians of the rock. Very many people prophesied that before the year was out we should all suffer some great misfortune; but the time passed and nothing untoward occurred, on the contrary each of us has since then been given a title of greater honour. Wonderful are the works of God!

L A S E B I K A N · *Variety*¹

Why do we grumble because a tree is bent,
 When, in our streets, there are even men who are bent?
 Why must we complain that the new moon is slanting?
 Can any one reach the skies to straighten it?
 Can't we see that some cocks have combs on their heads, but
 no plumes in their tails?
 And some have plumes in their tails, but no claws on their toes.
 And others have claws on their toes, but no power to crow?
 He who has a head has no cap to wear, and he who has a cap
 has no head to wear it on.
 He who has good shoulders has no gown to wear on them, and
 he who has the gown has no good shoulders to wear it on,
 The Owa has everything but a horse's stable.
 Some great scholars of Ifa cannot tell the way to Ofa.
 Others know the way to Ofa, but not one line of Ifa.
 Great eaters have no food to eat, and great drinkers no wine to
 drink:
 Wealth has a coat of many colours!

A B I D A D R U M M E R · *Modernization*²

The name of Allah is the beginning of all learning.
 Let us speak of the day when *Etsu Bello* bought a motor-car.
 On the day when *Etsu Bello* bought a motor-car,
 The whole of Bida went out to build a road.
 Younger brother and elder brother, they went out to build the
 road.
 All the people on the farms went out to build the road.
 The young bride, she went to build the road.
 The bridegroom, he went to build the road.
 But why did they all go out to build the road?

¹ This is a translation of a Yoruba poem belonging to the class known as *Arofo*, i.e. poems composed on abstract subjects, quoted by E. L. Lasebikan, in *The Tonal Structure of Yoruba Poetry*, Présence Africaine, Nos. 8-10, June/Nov. 1956, *le 1^{er} Congrès International des Écrivains et Artistes Noirs*, p. 49.

² Translation of a Nupe praise-song, composed in 1918 by one of the drummers of Bida in honour of *Etsu Bello*'s first motor-car, and quoted by S. F. Nadel in *A Black Byzantium*, Oxford, 1942, pp. 140-1, as an example of efficient 'propaganda for the [Nupe] Kingdom'. *Etsu Bello* reigned from 1915 to 1924.

It was because *Etsu* Bello had bought a motor-car.
 Because of that all the people went out to build a road.
 They said: Let us build a road on which the car can travel.
 Then the man who wants to go to Baddeggı, in this car he will go.
 And Zungeru, the man who wants to go to Zungeru, in this car
 he will go.

And Wuya, who will travel to Wuya, in this car he will go.
 The man who will go to Jima, in this car he will go.
 The man who will go to Kacha, in this car he will go.
 The man who will travel beyond the river, in this car he will go.
 Thus he will go, they said, and therefore let us make the road.
Etsu Bello has the money to buy the car,
 But the car will benefit all the people of Bida, from the farms
 and from the city,

The great man and the servant.
 They thank *Etsu* Bello because he has bought the car.
Etsu Bello, who has horses, and who now has a car.
Etsu Bello can say: Though the horse may break his legs
 We shall go all the same.

On the day when *Etsu* Bello bought the motor-car,
 The bottles of the glass-makers turned into red beads.
 And the kernels of the gombara grass became necklaces.¹
 In that year when *Etsu* Bello bought the motor-car,
 The men were beating the ground,
 And the woman, she was sitting at home.

How did it happen that the woman was sitting at home?
 Of old it was the woman who was beating the ground,
 And the man he just stood and watched.

But because of this motor-car of *Etsu* Bello,
 All the men were beating the ground, and that is that.²
 And all the people, the whole of Bida,
 They were saying their thanks to *mace da ciki*.³
 And all Bida was giving thanks to *karan giya*,³

¹ 'i.e., all the people who went out to see the motor-car were dressed in their most beautiful dress, and the glass-makers of Bida were busy manufacturing ornaments for the occasion.' (Nadel.)

² 'By "beating the ground" is meant the levelling of the ground in road building, The same term is also used for the levelling of the floor in Nupe huts, a work which is reserved for women. Therefore this comment on the change of times.' (Nadel.)

³ *Mace da ciki* (Hausa, pregnant woman); *Karan giya* (Hausa, a grass with prickles, *Pennisetum*)—both nicknames for the District Officer of the day. (Nadel.)

Who has sold the car to *Etsu Bello*.

And all the people were giving thanks to *Etsu Bello*,
Because he gave his money to buy a motor-car,
That motor-car that will become a thing of benefit
To all the human beings.

A K I G A · *The Idea of History*¹

It has been my constant prayer that God would help me to write this book, in order that the new generation of Tiv, which is beginning to learn this New Knowledge, should know the things of the fathers as well as those of the present generation. For everything that belongs to the Tiv is passing away, and the old people, who should tell us about these things, will soon all be dead. It makes me sad to think that our heritage is being lost, and that there will be none to remember it. . . .

You, then, my Tiv brothers of the new generation that can read, read [this book] and tell others, who cannot, of the things of our ancestors; so that, whether we have learnt to read or not, we all may still know something of our fathers who have gone before us. And do you, however great your knowledge may be, remember that you are a Tiv, remain a Tiv, and know the things of Tiv; for therein lies your pride. Let us take heart. The old mushroom rots, another springs up, but the mushroom tribe lives on.

¹ From Akiga, *Akiga's Story*, translated by Rupert East, Oxford, 1939, pp. 2-4.
See above, Sect. V, p. 142.

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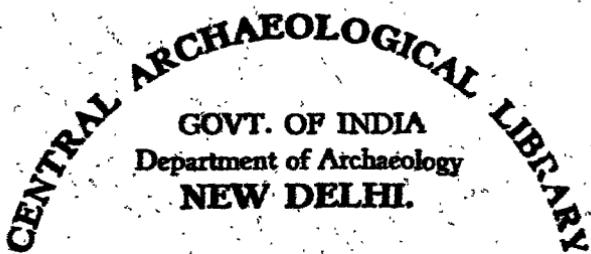
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